

Chapter 71A.20 RCW
RESIDENTIAL HABILITATION CENTERS

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RCW 71A.20.010 Scope of chapter. (1) This chapter covers the operation of residential habilitation centers. The selection of persons to be served at the centers is governed by chapters 71A.16 and 71A.18 RCW. The purposes of this chapter are: To provide for those persons who are exceptional in their needs for care, treatment, and education by reason of developmental disabilities, residential care designed to develop their individual capacities to their optimum; to provide for admittance, withdrawal and discharge from state residential habilitation centers upon application; and to insure a comprehensive program for the education, guidance, care, treatment, and rehabilitation of all persons admitted to residential habilitation centers.

(2) Effective no later than July 1, 2012, no person under the age of sixteen years may be admitted to receive services at a residential habilitation center. Effective no later than July 1, 2012, no person under the age of twenty-one years may be admitted to receive services at a residential center, unless there are no service options available in the community to appropriately meet the needs of the individual. Such admission is limited to the provision of short-term respite or

crisis stabilization services. [2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 4; 1988 c 176 s 701.]

Findings—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: "The legislature finds that:

(1) A developmental disability is a natural part of human life and the presence of a developmental disability does not diminish a person's rights or the opportunity to participate in the life of the local community;

(2) The system of services for people with developmental disabilities should provide a balanced range of health, social, and supportive services at home or in other residential settings. The receipt of services should be coordinated so as to minimize administrative cost and service duplication, and eliminate unnecessarily complex system organization;

(3) The public interest would best be served by a broad array of services that would support people with developmental disabilities at home or in the community, whenever practicable, and that promote individual autonomy, dignity, and choice;

(4) In Washington state, people living in residential habilitation centers and their families are satisfied with the services they receive, and deserve to continue receiving services that meet their needs if they choose to receive those services in a community setting;

(5) As other care options for people with developmental disabilities become more available, the relative need for residential habilitation center beds is likely to decline. The legislature recognizes, however, that residential habilitation centers will continue to be a critical part of the state's long-term care options; and that such services should promote individual dignity, autonomy, and a home-like environment; and

(6) In a time of fiscal restraint, the state should consider the needs of all persons with developmental disabilities and spend its limited resources in a manner that serves more people, while not compromising the care people require." [2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 1.]

Intent—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: "It is the intent of the legislature that:

(1) Community-based residential services supporting people with developmental disabilities should be available in the most integrated setting appropriate to individual needs; and

(2) An extensive transition planning and placement process should be used to ensure that people moving from a residential habilitation center to a community setting have the services and supports needed to meet their assessed health and welfare needs." [2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 2.]

Conflict with federal requirements—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: "If any part of this act is found to be in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state." [2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 14.]

RCW 71A.20.020 Residential habilitation centers. (1) Except as provided in subsections (2) and (3) of this section, the following residential habilitation centers are permanently established to provide services to persons with developmental disabilities: Lakeland Village, located at Medical Lake, Spokane county; Rainier school, located at Buckley, Pierce county; Yakima Valley school, located at Selah, Yakima county; and Fircrest school, located at Seattle, King county.

(2) The Yakima Valley school, located at Selah, Yakima county, shall cease to operate as a residential habilitation center when the conditions in RCW 71A.20.180(1)(a) are met.

(3) The Rainier school, located at Buckley, Pierce county shall cease to operate as a residential habilitation center when the conditions in RCW 71A.20.191(5) are met. [2025 c 410 s 1; 2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 5; 1994 c 215 s 1; 1988 c 176 s 702.]

Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: See notes following RCW 71A.20.010.

Effective date—1994 c 215: "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 1, 1994]." [1994 c 215 s 3.]

RCW 71A.20.030 Facilities for Interlake School. (1) The secretary may use surplus physical facilities at eastern state hospital as a residential habilitation center, which shall be known as the "Interlake School."

(2) The secretary may designate and select such buildings and facilities and tracts of land at eastern state hospital that are surplus to the needs of the department for mentally ill persons and that are reasonably necessary and adequate for services for persons with developmental disabilities. The secretary shall also designate those buildings, equipment, and facilities which are to be used jointly and mutually by both eastern state hospital and Interlake School. [1988 c 176 s 703.]

RCW 71A.20.040 Use of Harrison Memorial Hospital property. The secretary may under RCW 72.29.010 use the Harrison Memorial Hospital property at Bremerton, Kitsap county, for services to persons with developmental disabilities. [1988 c 176 s 704.]

RCW 71A.20.050 Superintendents—Secretary's custody of residents. (1) The secretary shall appoint a superintendent for each residential habilitation center. The superintendent of a residential habilitation center shall have a demonstrated history of knowledge, understanding, and compassion for the needs, treatment, and training of persons with developmental disabilities.

(2) The secretary shall have custody of all residents of the residential habilitation centers and control of the medical, educational, therapeutic, and dietetic treatment of all residents, except that the school district that conducts the program of education provided pursuant to RCW 28A.190.030 through 28A.190.050 shall have

control of and joint custody of residents while they are participating in the program. The secretary shall cause surgery to be performed on any resident only upon gaining the consent of a parent, guardian, or limited guardian as authorized, except, if after reasonable effort to locate the parents, guardian, or limited guardian as authorized, and the health of the resident is certified by the attending physician to be jeopardized unless such surgery is performed, the required consent shall not be necessary. [1990 c 33 s 589; 1988 c 176 s 705.]

Purpose—Statutory references—Severability—1990 c 33: See RCW 28A.900.100 through 28A.900.102.

RCW 71A.20.060 Work programs for residents. The secretary shall have authority to engage the residents of a residential habilitation center in beneficial work programs, but the secretary shall not engage residents in excessive hours of work or work for disciplinary purposes. [1988 c 176 s 706.]

RCW 71A.20.070 Educational programs. (1) An educational program shall be created and maintained for each residential habilitation center pursuant to RCW 28A.190.030 through 28A.190.050. The educational program shall provide a comprehensive program of academic, vocational, recreational, and other educational services best adapted to meet the needs and capabilities of each resident.

(2) The superintendent of public instruction shall assist the secretary in all feasible ways, including financial aid, so that the educational programs maintained within the residential habilitation centers are comparable to the programs advocated by the superintendent of public instruction for children with similar aptitudes in local school districts.

(3) Within available resources, the secretary shall, upon request from a local school district, provide such clinical, counseling, and evaluating services as may assist the local district lacking such professional resources in determining the needs of its exceptional children. [1990 c 33 s 590; 1988 c 176 s 707.]

Purpose—Statutory references—Severability—1990 c 33: See RCW 28A.900.100 through 28A.900.102.

RCW 71A.20.080 Return of resident to community—Notice—Adjudicative proceeding—Judicial review—Effect of appeal. (1) Whenever in the judgment of the secretary, the treatment and training of any resident of a residential habilitation center has progressed to the point that it is deemed advisable to return such resident to the community, the secretary may grant placement on such terms and conditions as the secretary may deem advisable after consultation in the manner provided in RCW 71A.10.070. The secretary shall give written notice of the decision to return a resident to the community as provided in RCW 71A.10.060. The notice must include a statement advising the recipient of the right to an adjudicative proceeding under RCW 71A.10.050 and the time limits for filing an application for an adjudicative proceeding. The notice must also include a statement

advising the recipient of the right to judicial review of an adverse adjudicative order as provided in chapter 34.05 RCW.

(2) A placement decision shall not be implemented at any level during any period during which an appeal can be taken or while an appeal is pending and undecided, unless authorized by court order so long as the appeal is being diligently pursued. [2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 10; 1989 c 175 s 143; 1988 c 176 s 708.]

Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: See notes following RCW 71A.20.010.

Effective date—1989 c 175: See note following RCW 34.05.010.

RCW 71A.20.090 Secretary to determine capacity of residential quarters. The secretary shall determine by the application of proper criteria the maximum number of persons to reside in the residential quarters of each residential habilitation center. The secretary in authorizing service at a residential habilitation center shall not exceed the maximum population for the residential habilitation center unless the secretary makes a written finding of reasons for exceeding the rated capacity. [1988 c 176 s 709.]

RCW 71A.20.100 Personal property of resident—Secretary as custodian—Limitations—Judicial proceedings to recover. The secretary shall serve as custodian without compensation of personal property of a resident of a residential habilitation center that is located at the residential habilitation center, including moneys deposited with the secretary for the benefit of the resident. As custodian, the secretary shall have authority to disburse moneys from the resident's fund for the following purposes and subject to the following limitations:

(1) Subject to specific instructions by a donor of money to the secretary for the benefit of a resident, the secretary may disburse any of the funds belonging to a resident for such personal needs of the resident as the secretary may deem proper and necessary.

(2) The secretary may pay to the department as reimbursement for the costs of care, support, maintenance, treatment, hospitalization, medical care, and habilitation of a resident from the resident's fund when such fund exceeds a sum as established by rule of the department, to the extent of any notice and finding of financial responsibility served upon the secretary after such findings shall have become final. If the resident does not have a guardian, parent, spouse, or other person acting in a representative capacity, upon whom notice and findings of financial responsibility have been served, then the secretary shall not make payments to the department as provided in this subsection, until a guardian has been appointed by the court, and the time for the appeal of findings of financial responsibility as provided in RCW 43.20B.430 shall not commence to run until the appointment of such guardian and the service upon the guardian of notice and findings of financial responsibility.

(3) When services to a person are changed from a residential center to another setting, the secretary shall deliver to the person, or to the parent, guardian, or agency legally responsible for the person, all or such portion of the funds of which the secretary is custodian as defined in this section, or other property belonging to

the person, as the secretary may deem necessary to the person's welfare, and the secretary may deliver to the person such additional property or funds belonging to the person as the secretary may from time to time deem proper, so long as the person continues to receive service under this title. When the resident no longer receives any services under this title, the secretary shall deliver to the person, or to the parent, person, or agency legally responsible for the person, all funds or other property belonging to the person remaining in the secretary's possession as custodian.

(4) All funds held by the secretary as custodian may be deposited in a single fund, the receipts and expenditures from the fund to be accurately accounted for by the secretary. All interest accruing from, or as a result of the deposit of such moneys in a single fund shall be credited to the personal accounts of the residents. All expenditures under this section shall be subject to the duty of accounting provided for in this section.

(5) The appointment of a guardian for the estate of a resident shall terminate the secretary's authority as custodian of any funds of the resident which may be subject to the control of the guardianship, upon receipt by the secretary of a certified copy of letters of guardianship. Upon the guardian's request, the secretary shall immediately forward to the guardian any funds subject to the control of the guardianship or other property of the resident remaining in the secretary's possession, together with a full and final accounting of all receipts and expenditures made.

(6) Upon receipt of a written request from the secretary stating that a designated individual is a resident of the residential habilitation center and that such resident has no legally appointed guardian of his or her estate, any person, bank, corporation, or agency having possession of any money, bank accounts, or choses in action owned by such resident, shall, if the amount does not exceed two hundred dollars, deliver the same to the secretary as custodian and mail written notice of the delivery to such resident at the residential habilitation center. The receipt by the secretary shall constitute full and complete acquittance for such payment and the person, bank, corporation, or agency making such payment shall not be liable to the resident or his or her legal representative. All funds so received by the secretary shall be duly deposited by the secretary as custodian in the resident's fund to the personal account of the resident. If any proceeding is brought in any court to recover property so delivered, the attorney general shall defend the lawsuit without cost to the person, bank, corporation, or agency that delivered the property to the secretary, and the state shall indemnify such person, bank, corporation, or agency against any judgment rendered as a result of such proceeding. [1988 c 176 s 710.]

RCW 71A.20.110 Clothing for residents—Cost. When clothing for a resident of a residential habilitation center is not otherwise provided, the secretary shall provide a resident with suitable clothing, the actual cost of which shall be a charge against the parents, guardian, or estate of the resident. If such parent or guardian is unable to provide or pay for the clothing, or the estate of the resident is insufficient to provide or pay for the clothing, the clothing shall be provided by the state. [1988 c 176 s 711.]

RCW 71A.20.120 Financial responsibility. The subject of financial responsibility for the provision of services to persons in residential habilitation centers is covered by RCW 43.20B.410 through 43.20B.455. [1988 c 176 s 712.]

RCW 71A.20.130 Death of resident, payment of funeral expenses—Limitation. Upon the death of a resident of a residential habilitation center, the secretary may supplement such funds as were in the resident's account at the time of the person's death to provide funeral and burial expense for the deceased resident. These expenses shall not exceed funeral and burial expenses allowed under *RCW 74.08.120. [1988 c 176 s 713.]

***Reviser's note:** RCW 74.08.120 was repealed by 1997 c 58 s 1002.

RCW 71A.20.140 Resident desiring to leave center—Authority to hold resident limited. (1) If a resident of a residential habilitation center desires to leave the center and the secretary believes that departures may be harmful to the resident, the secretary may hold the resident at the residential habilitation center for a period not to exceed forty-eight hours in order to consult with the person's legal representative as provided in RCW 71A.10.070 as to the best interests of the resident.

(2) The secretary shall adopt rules to provide for the application of subsection (1) of this section in a manner that protects the constitutional rights of the resident.

(3) Neither the secretary nor any person taking action under this section shall be civilly or criminally liable for performing duties under this section if such duties were performed in good faith and without gross negligence. [1988 c 176 s 714.]

RCW 71A.20.150 Admission to residential habilitation center for observation. Without committing the department to continued provision of service, the secretary may admit a person eligible for services under this chapter to a residential habilitation center for a period not to exceed thirty days for observation prior to determination of needed services, where such observation is necessary to determine the extent and necessity of services to be provided. [1988 c 176 s 715.]

RCW 71A.20.170 Developmental disabilities community services account—Creation—Required deposits—Permitted withdrawals—Investment of funds. (1) The developmental disabilities community services account is created in the state treasury.

(2) The following revenues must be deposited in the account:

(a) All net proceeds from leases or sales of real property, conservation easements, and sales of timber, from the state properties at the Fircrest residential habilitation center, the Lakeland Village residential habilitation center, the Rainier school, and the Yakima Valley school. However, real property that is determined by the department of social and health services to be required for the operations of the residential habilitation centers is excluded from the real property that may be leased or sold for the benefit of the account. In addition, real property owned by the charitable,

educational, penal, and reformatory institutions trust, and revenue therefrom, is excluded; and

(b) Any other moneys appropriated or transferred to the account by the legislature.

(3) Any sale, lease, or easement under this section must be at fair market value.

(4) Moneys in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account shall be used exclusively for:

(a) Supports and services in a community setting to benefit eligible persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities; or

(b) Investment expenses of the state investment board.

(5) The department of social and health services must solicit recommendations from the Washington state developmental disabilities council regarding expenditure of moneys from the Dan Thompson memorial developmental disabilities community services account for supports and services in a community setting to benefit eligible persons with developmental disabilities.

(6) Expenditures from the account must supplement, and may not replace, supplant, or reduce current state expenditure levels for supports and services in the community setting for eligible persons with developmental disabilities.

(7) (a) The state investment board must invest moneys in the account. The state investment board has the full power to invest, reinvest, manage, contract, sell, or exchange investment money in the account. All investment and operating costs associated with the investment of money shall be paid under RCW 43.33A.160 and 43.84.160.

(b) All investments made by the state investment board shall be made with the degree of judgment and care required under RCW 43.33A.140 and the investment policy established by the state investment board.

(c) The state investment board shall routinely consult and communicate with the department of social and health services and the legislature on the investment policy, earnings of the account, and related needs of the account.

(8) The account shall be known as the Dan Thompson memorial developmental disabilities community services account. [2020 c 250 s 1; 2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 12; 2008 c 265 s 1; 2005 c 353 s 1.]

Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: See notes following RCW 71A.20.010.

Effective dates—2005 c 353: "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 takes effect immediately [May 10, 2005], except for section 3 of this act which takes effect July 1, 2005, and section 4 of this act which takes effect July 1, 2006." [2005 c 353 s 7.]

RCW 71A.20.180 Closure of Yakima Valley school—Department duties—Continuation of services. (1) (a) The Yakima Valley school shall continue to operate as a residential habilitation center until such time that the census of permanent residents has reached eight persons. Upon such time as the facility closes to full residential care, the facility must thereafter operate crisis stabilization beds and only so many respite service beds as the needs of the department-

identified catchment area or as emergency placement needs require, subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose.

(b) As of October 19, 2017, no new long-term admissions are permitted.

(2) The department, within available funds:

(a) Shall establish state-operated living alternatives, within funds specifically provided in the omnibus appropriations act, to provide community residential services to residential habilitation center residents transitioning to the community under chapter 30, Laws of 2011 1st sp. sess. who prefer a state-operated living alternative. The department shall offer residential habilitation center employees opportunities to work in state-operated living alternatives as they are established;

(b) May use existing supported living program capacity in the community for former residential habilitation center residents who prefer and choose a supported living program;

(c) Shall establish up to eight state-staffed crisis stabilization beds and up to eight state-staffed respite beds based upon funding provided in the omnibus appropriations act and the geographic areas with the greatest need for those services;

(d) Shall establish regional or mobile specialty services evenly distributed throughout the state, such as dental care, physical therapy, occupational therapy, and specialized nursing care, which can be made available to former residents of residential habilitation centers and, within available funds, other individuals with developmental disabilities residing in the community; and

(e) Shall continue to provide respite services in residential habilitation centers and continue to develop respite care in the community. [2017 3rd sp.s. c 19 s 1; 2011 1st sp.s. c 30 s 6.]

Findings—Intent—Conflict with federal requirements—2011 1st sp.s. c 30: See notes following RCW 71A.20.010.

RCW 71A.20.191 Rainier school—Admissions—Department's duties.

(1)(a) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, as of July 27, 2025, no new long-term admissions are permitted at the Rainier school, located at Buckley, Pierce county.

(b) Except as provided in subsection (2) of this section, as of June 30, 2027, no admissions of any kind are permitted at the Rainier school, located at Buckley, Pierce county.

(2) Until the conditions in subsection (5) of this section are met, a former long-term resident of the Rainier school who moves to a community-based setting after July 27, 2025, shall be offered the right to return to the Rainier school once during the first year following their move to the community and this shall not be considered a new admission for purposes of subsection (1) of this section. If a former resident of the Rainier school exercises the right to return established in this subsection (2), any additional request to return to the Rainier school after a second move to the community shall be reviewed by the department and must be approved by the secretary, based on the recommendation from a multidisciplinary care team. In addition to the right to return established in this subsection (2), any former resident of the Rainier school maintains the right to return to a residential habilitation center established in RCW

71A.18.040 and the right to residential habilitation center services when determined eligible.

(3)(a) The department shall:

(i) Provide state-operated living alternatives to residential habilitation center residents transitioning to the community from the Rainier school who prefer a state-operated community residential service;

(ii) Use supported living program and adult family home capacity in the community for residents of the Rainier school who prefer and choose these settings;

(iii) Provide space at other residential habilitation centers to residents of the Rainier school who prefer a different residential habilitation center setting; and

(iv) Offer employees of the Rainier school opportunities to work in state-operated living alternatives and other state facilities and programs.

(b) Sufficient funding shall be appropriated to the department to fulfill the requirements of this subsection (3).

(4) When assisting individuals who are transitioning out of the Rainier school the department shall:

(a) Offer each individual resident a meaningful choice of appropriate alternative placements;

(b) Prioritize client choice, autonomy, individual preferences, medical and behavioral health care needs, and opportunities for community integration;

(c) Develop individualized transition plans in collaboration with each resident and their family or legal guardian, caregivers, and support providers;

(d) Coordinate closely with other state agencies, local entities, health care providers, and community stakeholders to ensure seamless transitions;

(e) Provide or contract for all necessary assessments, planning, relocation expenses, housing modifications, staff training, crisis support, and related transition activities; and

(f) Implement robust oversight and accountability measures related to the transitions, and regularly monitor transition outcomes, as well as individual well-being and satisfaction.

(5) The Rainier school, located at Buckley, Pierce county shall continue to operate as a residential habilitation center until such time that the census of long-term residents has reached zero persons.

(6) "Closure" for purposes of chapter 410, Laws of 2025 means prohibiting new admissions as described in subsection (1) of this section. [2025 c 410 s 2.]

RCW 71A.20.195 Rainier school—Reporting. (Expires July 1, 2030.) (1) The department of social and health services shall, in compliance with RCW 43.01.036, submit a report to the appropriate committees of the legislature on December 1, 2025, June 1, 2026, December 1, 2026, June 1, 2027, June 1, 2028, and annually thereafter that provides the information described in subsection (2) of this section.

(2) The report required under subsection (1) of this section must include the following:

(a) A point in time description of the capacity for all residential settings for clients of the developmental disabilities administration within the department of social and health services;

(b) The number of former residents who have transitioned out of the Rainier school after July 27, 2025, and the type of setting that the person transitioned to, including additional transitions from the initial placement;

(c) The number of deaths of former residents who have transitioned out of the Rainier school after July 27, 2025, and into other residential settings supported by the developmental disabilities administration;

(d) The geographic distribution of residential placements across all existing residential placements for clients of the developmental disabilities administration within the department of social and health services; and

(e) Information regarding former Rainier school employees who have transitioned to other state employment, left the industry, or transitioned to private sector employment after July 27, 2025.

(3) This section expires July 1, 2030. [2025 c 410 s 3.]

RCW 71A.20.800 Chapter to be liberally construed. The provisions of this chapter shall be liberally construed to accomplish its purposes. [1988 c 176 s 716.]

RCW 71A.20.900 Construction—Chapter applicable to state registered domestic partnerships—2009 c 521. For the purposes of this chapter, the terms spouse, marriage, marital, husband, wife, widow, widower, next of kin, and family shall be interpreted as applying equally to state registered domestic partnerships or individuals in state registered domestic partnerships as well as to marital relationships and married persons, and references to dissolution of marriage shall apply equally to state registered domestic partnerships that have been terminated, dissolved, or invalidated, to the extent that such interpretation does not conflict with federal law. Where necessary to implement chapter 521, Laws of 2009, gender-specific terms such as husband and wife used in any statute, rule, or other law shall be construed to be gender neutral, and applicable to individuals in state registered domestic partnerships. [2009 c 521 s 162.]