

CHRISTINE O. GREGOIRE
Governor



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March 16, 2005

Robin Arnold-Williams, Secretary
Department of Social and Health Services
P.O. Box 45010
Olympia, WA 98504-5010

Dear *Robin*

I am in receipt of a copy of a letter dated February 3, 2005, from the regional office of the Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families to the Department of Social and Health Service's Division of Child Support.

It provides advance notice that the Washington State Plan for Child Support Enforcement is at risk of disapproval because the child support guidelines in RCW 26.19 (pursuant to the federal regulations at 45 CFR 302.56) have not been reviewed and updated. This puts federal funding for this program at risk. Additionally, a recent study by Policy Studies Inc. – in conjunction with an earlier study by Dr. Kate Stirling, Ph.D., Professor of Economics, University of Puget Sound – identified several issues that should be addressed to bring these guidelines in compliance with federal regulations.

I understand that the Legislature is responsible for reviewing and updating the child support guidelines, and that the process should take place as quickly as possible. It is, however, extremely important to solicit community input before any suggested legislation is submitted. For that reason, I am directing the Division of Child Support to form a workgroup of community stakeholders to meet once a month, or more frequently as mutually agreed upon, to develop a written report to be presented to the Legislature by January 15, 2006. The report is to contain recommendations for needed amendments to our child support guideline statutes, a process for improving record keeping of orders entered, and a better method of ensuring that our child support guidelines are reviewed and updated as federally required.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Chris

Christine O. Gregoire
Governor

