



**STATE OF WASHINGTON**

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES  
P.O. Box 45040, Olympia, Washington 98504-5040**

November 30, 2010

Dear Tribal Leader,

The Department of Social and Health Services, Children's Administration, would like to bring to your attention the enclosed proposed agency request legislation, Z-0015.2 - Child Fatality Review in Child Welfare Cases.

This proposal would amend RCW 68.50.105 which will add the department as an agency that has access to confidential autopsy reports and records. The Children's Administration (CA) currently does not have the statutory authority to obtain autopsy reports through the course of an investigation or on cases that CA was involved within 12 months of a child's death. This is a barrier for the Administration when investigating child abuse and neglect reports. This also is a barrier when the Children's Administration is facilitating a required child death review.

RCW 74.13.640 requires that the department conduct a child fatality review of any unexpected death of a minor in the state who is in the care of or receiving services from the department or a minor who had been in the care or received services from the department within one year preceding the minor's death. This requires the department to conduct a review even when the death has been clearly accidental, such as a car accident. The review of accidental deaths requires significant time of Child Protective Services (CPS) program managers even though the death was clearly not the result of abuse or neglect.

Amending this statute would allow the department to conduct reviews of near fatalities at its discretion or at the request of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman. The ability to review near-fatalities would allow the department to identify current issues in the family and would enhance the identification of actions necessary to protect the child. These identified issues and actions that are necessary to protect the child in a particular case would be very beneficial in addressing similar issues in the general population of children.

The Children's Administration would like to invite you to a meeting to discuss this request legislation. The meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 8, 2010, 2:30 p.m., in the St. Helen's Conference Room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of OB-2. Directions to OB-2 are enclosed with this letter. Once you are in OB-2, follow the directions to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor

reception area. Please call Nancy Heath at (360) 902-7768 or (360) 790-1040 for access to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

If you are unable to attend this meeting, please provide any comments or questions to Nancy Heath at (360) 902-7768 or email, [nancy.heath@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:nancy.heath@dshs.wa.gov).

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Heath" in a cursive style. Below the signature, the word "for" is written in a smaller, simpler font.

David Del Villar Fox  
Legislative Liaison  
Children's Administration