Ryder's Law

Legislative Brief: Washington

Proposed Washington Legislative Framework | Presented by Carey Ann George | November 14, 2026 (Eastern Time)

For consideration by the Washington State Legislature. This is a policy proposal. It is not enacted law and not bill text drafted by the Code Reviser's Office.

The problem

When a court moves a child with serious medical needs to a new caregiver, nobody is required to confirm that the caregiver can actually do the feeding, medication, allergy, and emergency care the child needs. Urgent safety requests can wait days. Parents who need an existing parenting plan enforced must usually hire a lawyer and file a new motion every time. Families have no single public office responsible from the first report.

What Washington already has

- Coercive control is part of the definition of domestic violence in RCW 7.105.010 (added in 2022 by SHB 1901).
- RCW 26.09.191, as amended in 2025 (ESHB 1620), protects good-faith "protective actions" such as abuse reports and protection order petitions.
- Chapter 26.51 RCW lets courts restrict abusive litigation by a person found to have committed domestic violence.
- RCW 26.27.541 lets a prosecutor or the attorney general enforce custody determinations in cases under the UCCJEA.

Ryder's Law builds on these laws. It fills the gaps they leave.

Five priorities

1. Prevent harm before a transfer. Require observed caregiving competency, clinician-directed feeding and allergy safeguards, actual supplies, receiving-provider acceptance, and a safe hospital discharge and transport plan. Emergency treatment never stops.

2. Make protection timely and accessible. Immediate action on life threats, triage within 4 hours, clinical and interim review within 24 hours, and an acute hearing within 48 hours. No purchased expert, private lawyer, transcript, or supervision fee as a gate to urgent protection.

3. One accountable public office from the first report. Each county has one Child Custody and Parenting Order Enforcement Unit with a named case owner, public counsel with express standing to bring enforcement, state backup, and free supervisory review. Survivor-safety screening comes before any enforcement.

4. Independent correction of systemic failures. A new independent office reviews documented failures of safety routing, notice, records, and deadlines. It works alongside the Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds (chapter 43.06A RCW), which covers only DCYF, and refers judicial matters to the Commission on Judicial Conduct (chapter 2.64 RCW). It never reverses a court order.

5. Protect safety and due process together. A motion or lawyer's letter is not a signed order. Good-faith reporting is protected. No compelled recantation or unsafe reunification. No equal-time presumption. Sanctions require proven conduct and a fair hearing.

How it fits Washington law

Most new duties would sit in a new Ryder's Law chapter in Title 26 RCW. The bill would also amend RCW 26.09.191 (parenting plan limits), RCW 26.09.160 (parenting plan contempt), RCW 26.09.225 (records access), and RCW 26.12.175 (guardians ad litem), and add sections to chapter 26.27 RCW (interstate custody) and chapter 70.41 RCW (hospital discharge). Civil protection orders under chapter 7.105 RCW, child abuse reporting under chapter 26.44 RCW, and dependency under chapter 13.34 RCW keep their own standards.

Requested legislative action

- Sponsor a Ryder's Law bill in the House or Senate and request a fiscal note.
- Fund county Enforcement Units, public counsel, after-hours judicial coverage, and independent clinicians.
- Ask the Washington Supreme Court to adopt companion court rules (RCW 2.04.190).
- Direct the Administrative Office of the Courts, DCYF, counties, and county prosecutors to prepare a joint implementation plan.

The full 54-section proposal, with a Washington placement note for every section and links to each statute, is available on request.