
**Early Learning & Children's
Services Committee**

HB 2520

Brief Description: Creating a domestic violence pilot program to colocate a domestic violence advocate in a department of social and health services office.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Hudgins, Pedersen, Dickerson, Hasegawa, Walsh, Campbell, VanDeWege, Lias, Barlow, Green and Kelley.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes a pilot program to co-locate a domestic violence advocate in one office of the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services.

Hearing Date: 1/17/08

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Studies from the Child Welfare League of America show that child abuse occurs in 30 percent - 60 percent of domestic violence cases involving families with children. Between 1.5 million and 3.3 million children witness some form of violence at home each year. In one nationwide survey of 6,000 families, researchers found that 50 percent of men who frequently assault their wives also frequently abuse their children.

The Children's Administration (CA) has undertaken a number of steps to provide training on domestic violence issues to child protection and child welfare workers. The CA Social Worker Academy attended by all incoming caseworkers includes three hours of training specific to issues relating to domestic violence and child welfare. Beginning in 2006, the CA began partnering with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic (Coalition) to design collaborative training opportunities. In 2007 the CA and the Coalition jointly presented two two-day statewide training seminars for CPS staff and domestic violence program community providers.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The CA is working with the Coalition to establish domestic violence-related policies and to develop a guide for case workers to use in their child welfare work. The Coalition also is assisting the CA in development of a stand-alone training component specific to domestic violence and how it impacts child welfare. That training component is planned for implementation in 2009. The CA also has signed a letter of support for the Coalition's application for a grant that if received, would provide for domestic violence advocates in five rural county CA offices.

In addition to the initiatives undertaken by the CA, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Domestic Violence Program provides support for community-based shelters, emergency counseling and legal advocacy for children and families who have experienced domestic violence. The DSHS also sets minimum standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs and certifies provider programs.

Summary of Bill:

Creation of the Pilot

The DSHS is required to create a pilot program to place a domestic violence advocate (Advocate) in a minimum of one CA office serving children and families. The express purpose of the program is to provide domestic violence safety planning, advocacy, information, and support to adult victims of domestic violence who are receiving services and to identify and respond effectively to domestic violence in child welfare caseloads.

The CA must use a request for proposal process and must select the site by September 2008. Specific criteria must be included in the request for proposal including experience providing domestic violence shelter or advocacy services and experience working with families involved with child protection or child welfare services.

The DSHS is required to convene an advisory group at the program site to provide advice on the implementation and progress of the pilot program. The group must include representation from: a local domestic violence agency; a public health entity; a domestic violence perpetrator treatment program; a protection order program; a law enforcement entity; the Coalition; and others as appropriate.

Respective Duties of Advocate and Site Supervisor

The Advocate co-located in the CA office must provide onsite education, consultation, and support to site staff to meet the needs of children and families presenting with domestic violence situations. The Advocate may not provide case consultation for any family to whom he/she is providing direct services and may not provide direct services to any family for whose case he/she is providing consultation.

The supervisor responsible for working with the Advocate at the site selected must be someone who has participated in best practices work groups for domestic violence issues and who has formal training and experience working with families affected by domestic violence and child maltreatment.

Program Goals

Twelve goals for the program are articulated as follows:

1. Increase the safety of children and adult victims of domestic violence who are involved with the department's Child Protective Services (CPS) division;

2. Increase the adult domestic violence victim's understanding of available domestic violence resources and supports;
3. Increase the adult domestic violence victim's and the domestic violence perpetrator's understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children;
4. Provide consultation and training to CPS case workers so that they may increase their knowledge of domestic violence and practice skills for addressing domestic violence in their caseloads, and provide safe, effective responses for children and their families experiencing domestic violence;
5. Decrease the rate at which victims of domestic violence are referred back to the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS);
6. Decrease the number of children of domestic violence victims that are placed in protective custody;
7. Improve the ability of the DCFS case workers to accurately identify the full spectrum of abusive and coercive tactics that are utilized by domestic violence perpetrators, and their impact on children's safety and well-being, as well as the way they disrupt or undermine the parenting practices of adult victims of domestic violence;
8. Improve the ability of DCFS case workers to identify the range of strategies employed by adult domestic violence victims to support the safety and well-being of their children;
9. Increase the strategies available to DCFS case workers to hold the domestic violence perpetrator accountable for abusive and coercive behavior and its adverse impact on children;
10. Increase the ability of DCFS case workers to accurately identify the domestic violence perpetrator as the person responsible for the adverse impact of domestic violence on children;
11. Strengthen collaborations between the DSHS staff and community providers and resources; and
12. Conduct an evaluation of the program by comparing the outcomes of the program office to the outcomes of a comparison office that does not have the domestic violence advocate, and to develop a report of the findings and recommendations that may be used to replicate the program statewide.

Program Evaluation

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) shall evaluate the pilot program. Evaluation shall include preprogram assessment, including comparison of the pilot site to another CA office serving children and families where a domestic violence advocate is not co-located. Following the preprogram assessment, the Institute must evaluate the pilot program based on 10 specified program outcomes. The Institute must use the results of the evaluation to identify effectiveness of the program, including effectiveness of training, consultation, and advocacy services; changes in social worker practices; improvements in services to families; barriers to implementing program services; and service gaps for families affected by domestic violence. The evaluation must include recommendations to the DSHS for improving responses to domestic violence in other CA offices serving children and families. A report from the institute to the Legislature is due December 1, 2011.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 10, 2008.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.