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**Education Committee**

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**SSB 6742**

**Brief Description:** Requiring development of programs and guidelines for students with autism.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Early Learning & K-12 Education (originally sponsored by Senators Rasmussen, McAuliffe, Tom and Kline).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), together with the autism task force and others, to develop guidelines for an autism-specific supplement to be used in conjunction with individualized education programs (IEPs) and to report these guidelines to the Governor, Legislature, and the school districts.
- Requires school districts to use the guidelines to develop guidelines for an autism-specific IEP supplement.

**Hearing Date:** 2/26/08

**Staff:** Cece Clynch (786-7195).

**Background:**

*Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD).* ASD is a developmental disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is characterized by impairments in social interactions, language and communication, and repetitive behaviors and preoccupations. Across the spectrum, there is a wide variability in symptoms and severity. In Washington, ASD is estimated to affect between two and six children per 1000.

*Individualized Education Program (IEP).* In accordance with federal and state laws, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is charged with requiring each school district in the state to insure an appropriate educational opportunity for all children with disabilities between the ages of three and 21. By law, students with disabilities, including autism, are entitled to a free appropriate public education that includes special education and related services. Schools are required to develop an appropriate IEP for each eligible child.

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*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.*

Comprehensive evaluation is the first step in development of an IEP, providing information about a child's strengths, weaknesses, behavior, and how the child learns so as to formulate an IEP that allows the student to progress. An IEP meeting occurs after the evaluation of the child is completed and the school district has determined that the child is eligible for special education and related services. Parents, and the child if appropriate, participate in this initial meeting, as well as subsequent meetings to review the child's progress. Educator participants include an administrator, the child's general education teacher(s), the child's special education teacher, and the child's therapist, if any.

IEPs include several components, including statements or descriptions of:

- present levels of educational performance;
- annual goals and objectives;
- specific special education services to be provided;
- the extent to which the child will participate in the regular education program;
- the projected dates for initiation of services, the anticipated duration of services, the number of hours per day, and the length of the school year over which services will be provided; and
- appropriate objective criteria and evaluation procedures and schedules for determining on at least an annual basis whether the short-term instructional objectives are being met.

Neither state nor federal law require disability-specific IEPs for autism or any other disability.

*Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force.* In 2005, the Legislature created the Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force (task force). The 2007 Legislation extended and funded the task force through June 30, 2008.

### **Summary of Bill:**

The OSPI, together with the autism task force and representatives from state and nonprofit agencies that provide programs and services for people with autism, must develop guidelines for an autism-specific supplement to be used in conjunction with an IEP. Consideration must be given, but need not be limited, to:

- extended educational programming, including extended day and extended school year services;
- daily schedules which reflect minimal unstructured time;
- in-home and community based training;
- positive behavior support strategies;
- parent and family training and support;
- suitable staff to student ratio;
- communication interventions;
- social skills supports and strategies;
- professional educator and staff support and training; and
- teaching strategies.

By September 1, 2008, the OSPI shall develop recommendations for these guidelines and submit these to the Governor and the education committees of the Legislature. The OSPI shall report the policy guidelines to school districts by December 1, 2008 for the districts to use to develop and adopt their policies. By April 1, 2009, each school district "shall use the guidelines...to develop guidelines for an autism-specific supplement" to be used in conjunction with an IEP that addresses the unique needs of students with autism.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 19, 2008.

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