

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 3076

As Reported by House Committee On:
Human Services

Title: An act relating to evaluations of persons under the involuntary treatment act.

Brief Description: Concerning the involuntary treatment act.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson and Kenney; by request of Governor Gregoire.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services: 1/25/10, 1/28/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Modifies the definition of "likelihood of serious harm" in the Involuntary Treatment Act to include an additional basis for commitment.
- Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services and others, to search for a validated mental health assessment tool or combination of tools for the assessment of persons for detention, commitment, or revocation under the Involuntary Treatment Act.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Dickerson, Chair; Orwall, Vice Chair; Dammeier, Ranking Minority Member; Darneille, Green, Herrera, O'Brien and Walsh.

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

The Involuntary Treatment Act (ITA) sets forth the procedures, rights, and requirements for an involuntary civil commitment. When a designated mental health professional receives information alleging that a person, as a result of a mental disorder: (1) presents a likelihood

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of serious harm; or (2) is gravely disabled, the designated mental health professional may file a petition for an initial detention.

The Washington Supreme Court has held that the standard of "likelihood of substantial harm" evidenced by a recent overt act under the ITA provides a constitutional basis for detention under non-emergency circumstances. The court did not define "recent," but under the facts of the case in which it made its decision, the acts referred to had occurred within five to six days prior to the filing of the petition for initial detention.

Likelihood of Serious Harm and Gravely Disabled.

Under current law, "likelihood of serious harm" means that there is a substantial risk that:

- physical harm will be inflicted by a person upon his or her own person, as evidenced by threats or attempts to commit suicide or inflict physical harm on oneself;
- physical harm will be inflicted by a person upon another, as evidenced by behavior which has caused such harm or which places another person or persons in reasonable fear of sustaining such harm; or
- physical harm will be inflicted by a person upon the property of others, as evidenced by behavior which has caused substantial loss or damage to the property of others; or that the person has threatened the physical safety of another and has a history of one or more violent acts.

A person is "gravely disabled" if the person, as a result of a mental disorder:

- is in danger of serious physical harm resulting from a failure to provide for his or her essential human needs of health or safety; or
- manifests severe deterioration in routine functioning evidenced by repeated and escalating loss of cognitive or volitional control over his or her actions and is not receiving such care as is essential for his or her health or safety.

Authority for Involuntary Commitment.

Under non-emergency circumstances, the court may authorize persons to be initially detained for up to 72 hours for evaluation and treatment. Upon a petition to the court and subsequent order, the person may be involuntarily held for a further 14 days. Upon a further petition and order by a court, a person may be held for a period of 90 days. If a person has been determined to be incompetent and criminal charges have been dismissed, and the person has committed acts constituting a felony as a result of a mental disorder and presents a substantial likelihood of repeating similar acts, the person may be further committed for a period of up to 180 days. No order of commitment under the ITA may exceed 180 days.

Information Considered by the Court.

The ITA sets forth the kinds of information that may be considered by a court in determining whether a petition for an evaluation and treatment for 72 hours, for a commitment of 14 days, or a commitment of 90 days should be granted.

For a 72-hour evaluation and treatment, the designated mental health professional who is conducting the evaluation shall include all reasonably available information regarding: (1) prior recommendations for evaluation of the need for civil commitments when made pursuant

to criminal allegations; (2) a history of one or more violent acts; (3) prior determinations of incompetency or insanity; and (4) prior commitments under the ITA.

For a petition for a 14-day commitment following a 72-hour evaluation and treatment, or a subsequent 90-day commitment, the court is required to give great weight to: (1) a recent history of one or more violent acts; or (2) a recent history of one or more commitments under the ITA or its equivalent provisions under the laws of another state. The existence of prior violent acts may not be the sole basis of determining whether a person presents a likelihood of serious harm.

The statute defines "recent" as a period of time not exceeding three years prior to the current hearing.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Change in Definition of "Likelihood of Serious Harm".

In addition to the two prongs of the current definition, the definition of "likelihood of serious harm" is modified to add an additional prong, as follows:

- "Likelihood of serious harm" means that a person has taken an action or engaged in behavior, accompanied by signs of mental disorder that, when considered in light of past behavior of the respondent, is likely to be followed in the near future by an attempt to do physical harm or cause substantial property destruction.

This additional method of determining "likelihood of serious harm" affects determinations regarding all petitions for involuntary commitment.

Risk Assessment Tool.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy, in collaboration with the Department of Social and Health Services and other applicable entities, is required to search for a validated mental health assessment tool or combination of tools for the assessment of individuals for detention, commitment, or revocation under the ITA. This provision of the act expires on June 30, 2011.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The addition to the definition of "likelihood of serious harm" is modified to increase clarity, and the term "recent overt act" is removed from the definition section.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) One of the goals of this bill is to make sure that a person gets into treatment before there is a crisis. The statute is currently limited to an immediate threat rather than "escalating behavior." In case law around sexually violent predators, there is an ability to distinguish between persons who have a past history and those who do not. This is another way of approaching the goal to get the attention of the authorities when a person's mental state is deteriorating. Compliments to the sponsor of the bill for changing the direction in which the state is going on these issues.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Dickerson, prime sponsor; Kari Burrell, Office of the Governor; Seth Dawson and Eleanor Owen, National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.