
**Early Learning & Human Services
Committee**

HB 1774

Brief Description: Measuring performance of the child welfare system.

Sponsors: Representatives Freeman, Goodman, Haler, Roberts, Farrell, Kagi, Stanford, Stonier, Bergquist, Ryu, O'Ban, Morrell, Fey, Pollet and Santos.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the University of Washington, through Partners for our Children, to develop measurements for the indicators of safety, permanency, and well-being in the child welfare system, using data provided by the Department of Social and Health Services and other state agencies.

Hearing Date: 2/19/13

Staff: Linda Merelle (786-7092).

Background:

In 1998 a lawsuit was filed against Washington State and the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) on behalf of foster children who had experienced harmful conditions during their time in foster care caused by placements in multiple foster homes and insufficient services. A settlement agreement between the parties resulted in 2004, and within it, the DSHS agreed to make reforms in six key areas: placement stability; mental health; foster parent training; unsafe or inappropriate placements; sibling separation; and adolescent services. The settlement also established the Braam Oversight Panel (Oversight Panel) consisting of five independent members who were to create an implementation plan to improve outcomes in these areas and to oversee the DSHS's progress in making reforms.

The Oversight Panel issued a report for the first half of 2012 which indicated that the DSHS had made significant progress in improving many aspects of the state's foster care system. In

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.

October 2011, the parties entered into a revised settlement agreement that acknowledged the DSHS's acknowledge that some outcomes had not been met. The revised agreement extended the Oversight Panel's operations only until December 31, 2012.

"Partners for our Children" (POC), founded in 2007, is a collaboration between the DSHS, the University of Washington School of Social Work, and private sector funding.

Summary of Bill:

Indicators of safety, permanency, and well-being are specified and they must be used to measure the delivery of appropriate services for children and families served by the child welfare system, to identify areas for future improvements to the child welfare system, and to maintain public accountability. The indicators are as follows:

Safety:

- prevention of placement in out-of-home care;
- recurrence of contact with the child welfare system for children in home care; and
- recurrence of nonroutine child welfare interventions regarding children in out-of-home care.

Permanency:

- safe reunification of children placed in out-of-home care;
- length of time to permanence for children placed in out-of-home care; and
- placement stability for children placed in out-of-home care.

Well-being:

- maintenance of family relationships for children placed in out-of-home care;
- levels of educational readiness and attainment for children served by the child welfare system;
- behavioral and physical health of children served by the child welfare system; and
- adult functioning of youth who have aged out of the child welfare system, including social integration and independence.

The University of Washington (UW), through POC, and in cooperation with the DSHS, including its Research and Data Division (RDA), and other stakeholders, must develop measurements for the indicators of safety, permanency and well-being. State agencies under this act are defined as any agency or subagency providing data used in the integrated client database maintained by the RDA.

The measurements must be developed using existing and available data and must not require state agencies to provide individually identifiable information. The indicator measurements must use a methodology accepted by the scientific community, and wherever possible, must address any disproportionate racial and ethnic inequality. The measurements must be developed by December 31, 2013.

By December 31, 2013, the state agencies must execute agreements with POC regarding data sharing to comply with this act. The state agencies must provide the UW with all measurement data at least quarterly, beginning March 1, 2014. The POC must make the data publicly available

and issue a public report at least biannually, beginning September 1, 2014. The POC must report to the Legislature and the Governor, annually, starting December 31, 2014.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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