

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SB 6672

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to reports of abuse of children and adult dependent and developmentally disabled persons.

Brief Description: Requiring department of corrections personnel to report suspected abuse of children and adult dependent and developmentally disabled persons.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Long and Oke; by request of Department of Social and Health Services and Department of Corrections.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/16/96, 2/20/96 [DPA].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Lambert, Vice Chairman; Stevens, Vice Chairman; Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Brown, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Buck; Carrell; Dickerson; Patterson and Sterk.

Staff: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background: Certain professionals are required by law to report incidents of abuse or neglect of children, dependent adults, or the developmentally disabled. These professionals include police officers, nurses, social service counselors, psychologists, pharmacists, licensed child care providers, juvenile probation officers, and Department of Social and Health Services' employees. This mandatory reporting requirement applies to these individuals whether they become aware of the incident during the course of their employment or on their own time.

Professionals making good faith, truthful reports are immune from civil or criminal liability arising out of the making of such reports.

Summary of Amended Bill: Department of Corrections personnel are added to the list of professionals who are required to report incidents of abuse or neglect of children, dependent adults, or the developmentally disabled.

Amended Bill Compared to Original Bill: Originally, only those Department of Corrections employees who regularly have contact with offenders or with children whom offenders are in contact with were made mandatory reporters. The mandatory reporting requirement was further limited to observations or information of abuse or neglect received by these employees on the job.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: (Original Bill) The bill originated out of discussions between the Department of Corrections and the Department of Social and Health Services regarding identifying means of preventing child abuse. The bill excludes a small group of employees from the reporting requirement. This group probably includes employees such as maintenance personnel, headquarters staff, and various secretaries. Department of Corrections personnel are not opposed to reporting abuse or neglect observed on off hours. The employees required to report abuse and neglect will be trained through a joint DSHS-DOC training program that currently exists.

Testimony Against: None presented.

Testified: (Pro) Jennifer Strus, Department of Social and Health Services; and Victoria Roberts, Department of Corrections.