

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6514

As Passed Senate, February 9, 1996

Title: An act relating to preservation services.

Brief Description: Enhancing preservation services for families.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Long, Hargrove, Schow, Kohl and Winsley).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/24/96, 2/1/96 [DPS].
Passed Senate, 2/9/96, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6514 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kohl, Long, Moyer, Prentice, Schow, Smith, Strannigan, Thibaudeau and Zarelli.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: "Preservation services" for families are divided into two classes of services "intensive family preservation services" and "family preservation services." Either service may be delivered in the home or in the community. The services include respite care, parenting skills, and the promotion of the child and family's well-being.

"Family preservation services" must ensure the safety of the child and strengthen the family, empower the family to become self-sufficient, utilize community supports, and locate and refer the family to basic support services. The services may be provided to children and their families when the child faces a "substantial likelihood of out-of-home placement" due to child abuse or neglect, a serious threat to their health, safety or welfare, or family conflict. Caseworkers may handle up to ten cases at a time and the services are limited to a maximum of ninety days.

"Intensive family preservation services" share many of the characteristics of family preservation services, but are available sooner, caseloads are limited to an average of two families, and are limited to 40 days in duration. The services are provided when the child is in "imminent risk" of out-of-home placement.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to provide the services through outcome-based, competitive contracts with social service agencies, unless there is no provider available. Last session the Legislature required the DSHS to develop a plan for the statewide implementation of both types of preservation services.

It has been suggested that the expanded use of paraprofessional workers and community support systems would provide expanded availability and effectiveness of preservation services. Additionally, it is believed that requiring follow-up services as part of the departments' contracts would increase the cost-effectiveness of the services.

The providers of intensive family preservation services are required to demonstrate the services prevent out-of-home placement for at least six months in 70 percent of the cases served.

Summary of Bill: The department's contractors of preservation services for families may use paraprofessional workers in delivering the services. Paraprofessional workers are individuals who are trained to provide assistance and community support development. These workers are required to act under the supervision of a preservation services therapist.

The providers of preservation services must help the families in the development and maintenance of community support systems. The support systems include family, friends, neighbors, religious organizations, and other support groups or organizations. The providers may also provide follow-up services, on an individual case basis, for up to one year after the delivery of the initial services.

Caseload for intensive family preservation services may be increased from an average of two families per caseworker to five families when paraprofessional workers are used. The intensive services may be offered for up to 90 days instead of 40 days. The less intensive services may be provided for up to six months instead of 90 days. The department may require the services to be extended on an individual case basis.

The threshold for qualifying for Family Preservation Services (FPS) is lowered from a "substantial likelihood" of out-of-home placement of a child to a "likelihood" of out-of-home placement. DSHS must adopt rules to implement chapter.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 20, 1996.

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

Testimony For: The provisions in the bill will improve the effectiveness of the preservation services and will allow more families to be served. The services provided by paraprofessional workers has been very helpful in increasing the efficiency of services. This will allow for the providers to follow-up on the services to enhance their effectiveness. The present model for services required this added flexibility.

Testimony Against: The family preservation services would be more effective if they could be offered before there is a "substantial likelihood" of out-of-home placement. If you allow more families to be served you will dilute the quality of the services. There is no data showing the need for follow-up services.

Testified: PRO: Donald Lee Koenig, Catholic Community Services; Margaret Casey, WSCC; Jennifer Strus, DSHS; Charlotte Booth, Behavioral Sciences Inst. (concerns); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

House Amendment(s): Additional intent language is added requiring the services to be targeted to families who are most at risk.

The qualifying threshold for Family Preservation Services (FPS) is restored to the current standard which requires a "substantial likelihood" of out-of-home placement of a child.