

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1862

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to community-based alternative response systems.

Brief Description: Requiring a community-based response system for certain families referred to child protective services.

Sponsors: Representatives Cooke, Dickerson, Boldt and McDonald.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/21/97, 2/28/97 [DPS].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Boldt, Vice Chairman; Bush, Vice Chairman; Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Kastama, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes; Carrell; Dickerson; Gombosky; McDonald and Wolfe.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) uses a risk assessment matrix for screening reports of child abuse and neglect. The risk assessment matrix uses a five point scale for ranking reports. A score of five is the most serious report; a score of one, the least important. The department currently screens out reports with a score of three or lower. Screened-out cases do not typically receive services from the department. In some limited areas, the department does offer services to families that are screened-out.

Summary of Substitute Bill: The DSHS will create a community-based alternative response system for low-risk families who are screened-out by the risk assessment process. Services will be provided through contracts with community-based organizations.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The DSHS is provided greater flexibility in determining which cases will be referred to a community alternative response program.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1997.

Testimony For: Other states have instituted alternative response systems for low-risk child abuse referrals and have reduced further abuse. This is a cost-effective targeted prevention strategy.

Testimony Against: None presented.

Testified: Priscilla Martens, Behavioral Sciences Institute (pro); Seth Dawson, Common Ground for Children (pro); Elmira Forner, Catholic Community Services (pro); Alice Probert, Catholic Community Services (pro); and Janet Hedgepath, Catholic Community Services (pro).