

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6409

As Reported By House Committee On: Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to care for children with developmental disabilities provided by the department of social and health services in the division of developmental disabilities.

Brief Description: Redistributing responsibilities for care for children with developmental disabilities provided by the department of social and health services in the division of developmental disabilities.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Hargrove and Long; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/26/98 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: 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: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background: In the 1997 legislative session, the Legislature eliminated dependency actions that are based on parents incapability to care for developmentally disabled children. A new type of agreement, voluntary placement agreements, was created to allow developmentally disabled children to receive the same services as had been provided them through a finding of dependency. The agreements permit a child's parents to contract with the Children's Administration to place their child in out-of-home care.

This change was enacted as part of a move to transfer the care of developmentally disabled children whose parents are unable to care for them from Children's Administration to the Division of Developmental Disabilities. This consolidation concept was based upon a management report of the Department of Social and Health

Services (DSHS) suggesting that these cases could be more efficiently handled within the Division of Developmental Disabilities.

A bill making this transfer of authority was vetoed by the Governor in 1997. The Governor's veto statement directed DSHS to begin planning for the transfer and requested the Legislature grant DSHS the necessary budget transfer authority this session to affect the transfer.

Summary of Bill: The Division of Developmental Disabilities will assume responsibility for developmentally disabled children whose parents are unable to care for them, except children who suffer from abuse or neglect or whose permanency plan recommends adoption. The department is instructed to consolidate all services currently provided by the Children's Administration for developmentally disabled children in the Division of Developmental Disabilities. The Children's Administration will transfer staff and equipment to the division. The transfer of responsibility is to occur by July 1, 1998, and the levels and types of services presently available should not be affected.

The division is given the authority to provide, or arrange to have provided, home-based preventive and out-of-home care for children. These terms are defined.

The interdepartmental transfer must be accomplished within appropriated funds.

A technical correction is made to eliminate statutory language that has expired.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The transfer of authority will allow the department to be more responsive to developmentally disabled children's needs. This change is long past due. Many divisions within DSHS do not understand or serve the developmentally disabled population very well. The transfer will not be effective, however, if there is not funds to provide services. The transfer will not be complete if the budget does not also reflect the importance of providing for this population.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Dr. Tim Brown, Director of Division of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Social and Health Services (pro); Donna Patrick, Developmental Disabilities Council (pro); and Dave Wood, Action for RHC's (pro).