

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESB 6555

As Reported By House Committee On:
Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to the evaluations of foster children for long-term needs.

Brief Description: Ordering a study of evaluations of children needing long-term care.

Sponsors: Senators Long, Hargrove, Patterson, Costa, Eide, Winsley and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/23/00, 2/24/00 [DPA].

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill
(As Amended by House Committee)

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to report, to the Legislature, information about evaluations of children entering foster care.
- Requires the DSHS to make the appropriate number of referrals to the foster care assessment program.
- Requires the department to accomplish these tasks within existing resources.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass as amended. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Boldt, Republican Vice Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Campbell; Carrell; Dickerson; Eickmeyer; Kastama and Pflug.

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

Current law requires that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) evaluate all children entering the foster care system within 30 days of placement to identify long-term needs.

The Foster Care Assessment Program, administered by Harborview Medical Center, conducts comprehensive assessments of health and development for children in foster care. The assessments help determine service needs and provide a baseline against which to measure progress. The program operates under contract with the DSHS, and has the capacity to conduct approximately 350 assessments per year.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The department must report to the Legislature by December 31, 2000, and every six months thereafter, by region:

- the number of children evaluated during the first 60 days of placement;
- the evaluation tool(s) used;
- the findings from the evaluations;
- how the department used the evaluations to provide services to the foster child; and,
- whether and how the evaluations assisted in providing appropriate services.

In relation to the foster care assessment program, the department must:

- make the appropriate number of referrals;
- report to the Legislature by November 30, 2000, the number of referrals by region; and,
- report to the Legislature by December 15, 2000, on how it will use the foster care assessment program model to assess children as they enter out-of-home care.

The department must accomplish the above within existing resources.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Bill: The original bill required the department to report the number of children evaluated during the first 30 days of placement. The amended bill requires the department to evaluate children within 60 days of placement, and to report on this activity.

The amended bill explicitly states that the reporting requirement is not retroactive.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The bill is supported because it emphasizes the needs of the children.

Testimony Against: The bill requires the department to report retroactively to 1994. If that requirement is lifted, the majority of the department's concerns with the bill are alleviated.

Testified: (In support) Senator Long, prime sponsor; and Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.

(Concerns) Jake Romo, Department of Social and Health Services.