

HOUSE BILL ANALYSIS

ESB 6555

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.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Meeting Date: February 23, 2000.

Bill Analysis Prepared by: 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 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 30 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.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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