
Appropriations Committee

HB 2459

Brief Description: Changing children's programs and services as a result of budget reductions.

Sponsors: Representative Sommers; by request of Office of Financial Management.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Makes changes necessary to implement service reductions in the Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget for the Department of Social and Health Services - Children's Administration, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, and the Division of Developmental Disabilities budgets.
- Eliminates the Family Policy Council, Community Public Health and Safety Networks, Secure Crisis Residential Centers, Crisis Residential Center assessments, and the Alternative Response System.
- Makes truancy petitions under the Becca Bill and Family Reconciliation Services permissive rather than mandatory.
- Requires parents of developmentally disabled children in foster care and voluntary placements to participate in the child's cost of care.

Hearing Date: 1/29/02

Staff: Heather Flodstrom (786-7391).

Background:

Family Policy Council and Community Public Health and Safety Networks

The Family Policy Council was created in 1992 to address the needs of children and family not met by other state programs. The council distributes funding to 51 Community Public Health and Safety Networks that are working to address prevention and intervention needs in their own communities. The networks specifically work to reduce the prevalence of at-risk youth in their communities by doing such things as:

- 1) Providing grants to organizations working with at-risk youth;
- 2) working to prevent teen substance abuse and youth violence; and
- 3) providing mentoring and career skill building in schools.

7.5 percent of revenues to the Violence Reduction and Drug Education Account are dedicated to the community networks.

Family Reconciliation Services

Family Reconciliation Services (FRS) are designed to alleviate personal or family situations that present a serious and imminent threat to the health and stability of an adolescent or family, and to keep families together whenever possible. FRS is geared toward counseling and crisis intervention for families and especially teens aged 12-17, including several services required under "child in need of services" petitions.

Crisis Residential Centers

Secure Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs) are facilities with locked doors and windows, and fenced grounds. They operate as temporary (up to five-day) placements for youth who have run away. During a stay at a secure CRC, a youth will undergo an assessment of his or her needs and will begin the family reconciliation process. There are currently 66 secure CRC beds in Washington.

CRC assessments must be performed when a youth comes into a CRC. The assessment is provided to determine if the youth has a substance abuse or mental health problem so that proper treatment can be sought. Currently, these assessments have a very low utilization rate due to the short time that a youth is in a CRC (averages 2-3 days), and because of other assessments being performed on the youth and his or her family.

Developmentally Disabled Children

When a child enters state care, the child's biological parents are asked to participate in paying the cost of their child's care if they are financially able. Currently, parents of developmentally disabled children are exempt from this participation.

Alternative Response System

Alternative Response System (ARS) services consist of contracted programs throughout the state provided by public health nurses or other social service agencies that handle moderately low and low-risk Child Protective Services (CPS) referrals. The intent of ARS is to provide preventative interventions, thereby reducing the risk of child abuse and neglect and re-referrals to CPS.

Truancy

Under the Becca Bill, if a school district is unsuccessful in reducing student absences, the district must file a truancy petition in juvenile court against a student who has seven unexcused absences in any month or 10 unexcused absences in a given school year. If a school district fails to file such a petition, the parent of a child with five or more unexcused absences in any month, or upon 10 unexcused absences in a given school year, may file a truancy petition with a juvenile court. Truancy petitions are one of three petitions that can be filed under the Becca statutes. School districts and juvenile courts are authorized to create community truancy boards to assist in improving school attendance.

Summary of Bill:

Family Policy Council and Community Public Health and Safety Networks

All authorized statutes and references to the Family Policy Council and Community Public Health and Safety Networks are stricken.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$1.2 million General Fund - State and \$2.1 million Violence Reduction and Drug Enforcement Account from the elimination of the council and networks.

Family Reconciliation Services

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is authorized, but no longer required, to provide Family Reconciliation Services.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$1.6 million General Fund - State from a 36 percent reduction to Family Reconciliation Services.

Crisis Residential Centers

All statutes relating to the provision of CRC assessments are removed.

All statutes relating to secure CRCs are stricken and necessary changes are made to leave semi-secure CRCs as the available placement for children.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$140,000 General Fund - State from the elimination of CRC assessments, and \$4.7 million General Fund - State from the elimination of secure CRCs.

Developmentally Disabled Children

The DSHS is allowed to collect payments from parents of developmentally disabled children for the cost of their child's foster care. The courts are allowed to order parents of developmentally disabled children to pay child support if their child is in out-of-home care under a voluntary placement agreement.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$1 million General Fund - State and \$452,000 General Fund - Federal as a result of recouping the cost of care for developmentally disabled children in foster care and the voluntary placement program.

Alternative Response System

The DSHS is required to contract for ARS services only if funding is appropriated specifically for that purpose.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$1.1 million General Fund - State from the elimination of the ARS.

Truancy

All statutes relating to filing truancy petitions under the Becca Bill are made permissive, rather than mandatory, and the operation of community truancy boards is made subject to available funds. Additionally, school districts may file truancy petitions after five unexcused absences in any month during the school year.

The Governor's 2002 Supplemental budget recommendation assumes a savings of \$3.4 million General Fund - State and \$1.1 million Public Safety and Education Account from the elimination of the truancy petition requirements.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 18, 2002.

Effective Date: Sections 16-27 take effect July 1, 2002. The remaining sections take effect ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.