

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5963

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 7, 2002

Title: An act relating to juvenile offender parenting.

Brief Description: Providing parenting education for juvenile offenders who are parents.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Hargrove, Long, Costa, Carlson, Franklin, Oke, Gardner, Rasmussen and Kline.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/21/01, 2/22/01 [DPS]; 2/7/02 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 5963 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Carlson, Franklin, Hewitt, Kastama, Kohl-Welles, Long and Stevens.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: There is a small but significant percentage of girls sentenced to confinement at Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration facilities who enter the facility pregnant and give birth while confined. Currently, all pregnant juvenile offenders are placed at Echo Glen Children's Center, where they receive medical monitoring and management during pregnancy. In some cases, and depending upon availability and resources, a residential counselor is enlisted to act as a birthing coach. After birth, visiting times between juvenile offenders and their children may vary depending on the schedules of foster parents or guardians.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must establish a program of birth coaching for juvenile offenders who are pregnant. This program educates pregnant offenders about pregnancy, the medical monitoring they will receive, and the birth process. It also prepares the mother for relinquishing her infant to his or her guardian.

DSHS must report to the Legislature by December 1, 2002, on the number of juvenile offenders who are parents and who have not had their parental rights terminated. DSHS must also report the feasibility and fiscal impact of implementing a parenting education curriculum for juvenile offenders who are parents or expected to be parents. Finally, DSHS must report the feasibility and fiscal impact of instituting a program of regular visitation between offender parents and their children.

A juvenile offender's status as a parent or mother-to-be is determined at intake.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: The original bill was not considered.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 20, 2001.

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

Testimony For: Working with juvenile offenders who are pregnant or have children is an important issue. We must do whatever is possible to make sure that the bond between the juvenile parent and the child is not broken. Protecting this bond reduces recidivism and helps ensure that the child is properly cared for after the parent is released.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Cheryl Stephani, Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration (pro).