

FINAL BILL REPORT

SB 5311

C 259 L 05

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Creating an autism task force.

Sponsors: Senators Rasmussen, Jacobsen, McAuliffe, Mulliken, Stevens, Roach, Shin, Kohl-Welles and Spanel.

Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care
Senate Committee on Ways & Means
House Committee on Children & Family Services

Background: Autism is a complex neurological disorder that prevents normal brain development in the areas of communication and social interaction. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that autism may affect as many as one of every 250 births. Autism typically appears during the first three years of life, and can be detected as early as 18 months of age by knowledgeable professionals. Data compiled by the U.S. Department of Education indicates that diagnoses of autism are increasing rapidly.

Research demonstrates that early, intensive interventions can significantly increase a child's mental, communication, and behavioral skills. Once identified, children with autism in Washington are eligible for early intervention and family support services through the Department of Social and Health Services, and for special education when they reach school age. However, there is concern that many children are not being identified as soon as they might be; and that new strategies need to be developed to better prevent, identify, and treat autism.

Summary: The Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force is established to study and to make recommendations regarding the incidence of autism in Washington, and ways in which service coordination and delivery could be improved. The task force is to submit recommendations to the Governor and Legislature by December 2006.

The task force is to consist of fourteen members, including two members of the Senate; two members of the House of Representatives; and ten parents and public agency representatives appointed by the Governor.

The Department of Health is to provide staff support to the task force, with additional assistance from the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instructions, and legislative committee staff.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	48	0	
House	95	0	(House amended)
Senate	42	0	(Senate concurred)

Effective: July 24, 2005