
Judiciary Committee

SB 5107

Title: An act relating to authorizing, funding, and encouraging the establishment of therapeutic courts.

Brief Description: Encouraging the establishment of therapeutic courts.

Sponsors: Senators Padden, Pedersen, Roach, O'Ban, Darneille and Benton.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages the creation of therapeutic courts in Washington.• Consolidates current law into a single chapter.
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- Encourages the creation of therapeutic courts in Washington.
- Consolidates current law into a single chapter.

Hearing Date: 3/12/15

Staff: Brent Campbell (786-7152).

Background:

Therapeutic courts, also known as specialty courts, are courts that have specialized dockets that deal with treating a defendant's underlying substance abuse, mental health and/or co-occurring disorders while under the supervision of the courts. Therapeutic courts are currently authorized by statute.

Drug courts, driving under the influence (DUI) courts, mental health courts, family dependency courts, and juvenile gang courts are each specifically authorized. However, any jurisdiction that seeks a state appropriation to fund these court programs must first exhaust all federal funding that is available to support their operation and match, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, state moneys allocated for these courts. Minimum requirements for the participation of offenders in these programs are also set, including that a participant may not have been convicted of a serious violent offense or sex offense, or be currently charged with a crime that is a sex offense, a serious violent offense, or an offense during which the defendant used a firearm or caused substantial bodily harm or death to another person.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

More than 80 therapeutic courts currently exist in Washington, including: adult drug courts, juvenile drug courts, family treatment courts, DUI courts, domestic violence courts, mental health courts, and veterans treatment courts.

Summary of Bill:

The judiciary's inherent authority to create therapeutic courts is recognized and the judiciary is encouraged to create such courts by employing evidence-based and research-based best practices. The judiciary is encouraged to create:

- adult drug courts;
- juvenile drug courts;
- family dependency treatment courts or family drug courts;
- mental health courts;
- DUI courts;
- veterans treatment courts;
- truancy courts;
- domestic violence courts;
- gambling courts;
- community courts;
- homeless courts; and
- treatment, responsibility and accountability on campus (Back on TRAC) courts.

Current statutes relating to drug courts, DUI courts, mental health courts, juvenile gang courts, and therapeutic courts are repealed and statutes that reference these sections are amended and reincorporated and consolidated into a single chapter.

The Department of Social and Health Services is required to provide services to therapeutic courts addressing dependency matters where either substance abuse or mental health are at issue.

Certain individuals are deemed not eligible for participation in therapeutic courts, including individuals convicted of a serious violent offense or a sex offense, or charged with the intentional discharge or threat of discharge of a firearm in furtherance of an offense. Therapeutic courts may not be established for the purpose of applying foreign law and may not enforce a foreign law if doing so would violate either the state or federal constitution.

Jurisdictions that seek federal funding to support therapeutic courts are required to match, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, state moneys allocated for therapeutic courts. However, no matching of funds is necessary for state money expended for administrative and overhead costs associated with the operation of such courts until June 30, 2016. Every jurisdiction that authorizes a tax to provide for programs and services of therapeutic courts must, and every other jurisdiction may, establish and operate a therapeutic court for dependency proceedings.

Individual courts are also encouraged to establish multijurisdictional partnerships.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.