

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6357

As of January 18, 1996

Title: An act relating to children's services improvement.

Brief Description: Revising provisions relating to public health and safety.

Sponsors: Senator Quigley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/18/96, 1/23/96.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Staff: Andrea McNamara (786-7483)

Background: In 1970, the former Departments of Health, Institutions, and Public Assistance, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Veterans' Rehabilitation Council were merged to form the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). DSHS was designed to "integrate and coordinate all those activities involving provision of care for individuals who, as a result of their economic, social or health condition, require financial assistance, institutional care, rehabilitation, or other social and health services." DSHS currently provides services to approximately 1.2 million Washington residents per year, 47 percent of whom are children under the age of 18.

In 1981, the Department of Corrections (DOC) was created, and all DSHS responsibilities for adult correctional programs and institutions were transferred to DOC. The Department of Health (DOH) was established in 1989, and all DSHS responsibilities for public, personal, environmental, parent and child, and other health service programs were transferred to DOH.

The executive head of DSHS is the Secretary of Social and Health Services. The secretary is required to appoint a deputy secretary and assistant secretaries as needed, including assistant secretaries for juvenile rehabilitation and children's administration.

Summary of Bill: Part I. A new Department of Children's Services (DCS) is created.

Organizational principles for the structure of the department are specified, as are directives for providing leadership and coordination in minimizing the risks and strengthening protection and guidance for children. The powers and duties of the DCS secretary are outlined.

The new department is exempt from a number of statutory restrictions relating to, among other things, budgeting, personnel, and procurement procedures.

The following programs are transferred to the new department from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS): (1) the Division of Children and Family Services, including child welfare services and family reconciliation services, but not child protective services; (2) the Office of Support Enforcement; (3) the family policy council; and (4) those portions of the Division of Alcohol and Substance Abuse that relate to children and their families.

The following programs are transferred to the new department from the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED): (1) the early childhood education assistance program; (2) the homeless shelter program; (3) the community action agency network; and (4) the community mobilization program.

The secretary is required to submit to the Legislature by December 20, 1997, a plan for transferring the administrative direction of all the services transferred from DSHS and DCTED to certain eligible public health and safety networks. The eligibility criteria for which networks may assume administrative authority is specified. The secretary must begin implementation of the plan by June 30, 1998, unless the plan is specifically disapproved by the Legislature before that date.

The Office of Support Enforcement is given the new duty of assisting noncustodial parents in obtaining compliance with visitation orders.

A joint legislative task force is created to review existing laws governing children and families and to report its findings and recommendations to the Legislature by October 31, 1996.

Technical revisions to the networks are included, revised as necessary to reflect the new department and duties.

A number of definitions are added to the chapter containing the new department.

Part II. All powers, duties, and functions of DSHS child protective services are transferred to the office of the Attorney General, effective 90 days after the adjournment of the 1996 legislative session.

Part III. All powers, duties, and functions of DSHS conducted by a certified criminal justice agency are transferred to the office of the Attorney General, effective January 1, 1997. The intent of the transfer is identified as bolstering the state's ability to conduct independent investigations and remove potential conflicts of interest.

Part IV. All powers, duties, and functions of DSHS juvenile rehabilitation programs are transferred to the Department of Corrections, effective 90 days after adjournment of the 1996 legislative session.

Part V. All powers, duties, and functions of DSHS pertaining to licensing of agencies for the care of children, expectant mothers, and the developmentally disabled are transferred to the Department of Health, effective 90 days after the adjournment of the 1996 legislative session.

Provisions are included governing the transfer of personnel for each of the transferred programs. The manner in which the transfer of tangible property, appropriations, and budget apportionments takes place is also specified.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 11, 1996.

Effective Date: Sections 26 and 27 take effect immediately. Section 24 takes effect July 1, 1996.