

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 5009

As Reported By House Committee On:

Children & Family Services

Title: An act relating to interstate agreements to provide adoption assistance for special needs children.

Brief Description: Authorizing interstate agreements to provide adoption assistance for special needs children.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Long, Hargrove, Franklin, Zarelli, Sheldon, Winsley, Kohl and Patterson; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 3/27/97, 4/1/97 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Cooke, Chairman; Boldt, Vice Chairman; Bush, Vice Chairman; Tokuda, Ranking Minority Member; Kastama, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Ballasiotes; Carrell; Dickerson; Gombosky; McDonald and Wolfe.

Staff: Douglas Ruth (786-7134).

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services provides adoption support for eligible families who adopt children whose special needs make them hard to place without the support payments. These children usually have a physical or mental handicap, an emotional disturbance, or another trait that requires expensive care. The adoption assistance is provided through an agreement between the department and the parents of the adopted child. The assistance may include medical coverage through Medicaid, counseling, social services, reimbursement for adoption costs, and cash payments to meet a child's needs. The support obligation may continue even when the family moves to another state.

Most families who relocate to another state after entering the adoption assistance program have no difficulties receiving continued assistance. For a small number of families, however, relocation can cause an interruption or a reduction in assistance.

These families have difficulties because their children are not generally covered by Medicaid. The children receive Medicaid coverage only through the adoption assistance program. When these families relocate, they are often not covered by the medical assistance program of their new resident state and any medical bills incurred by them must be paid through Washington's medical system. In many instances this reduces or delays their medical coverage, as smaller medical providers are unwilling to bill through another state's medical assistance program.

Other families may have difficulty continuing their coverage after relocation due to administrative problems. Most Medicaid offices are not familiar with handling claims under another state's adoption support program, so medical assistance to these families is delayed or interrupted while administrative matters are straightened out.

Summary of Bill: The department secretary is authorized to enter into interstate compacts for the purpose of protecting children who receive assistance under adoption assistance programs and to set procedures for payments to relocated families. Interstate compacts entered into by the secretary must allow participation or withdrawal by any state, and require that if a state withdraws, that state will continue to apply the compact's provisions to the families who were subject to the compact. Compacts may establish procedures for the department to provide medical assistance and social services to adoption assistance children who no longer reside in the state.

The Medical Assistance Administration is authorized to provide Medicaid coverage to children who relocate to Washington but continue to be subject to an adoption assistance agreement made with another state. The administration may provide this assistance only if the other state has a reciprocal law or rule covering relocated children from Washington State.

For adopted children who move from Washington to another state, the medical administration is directed to supplement the medical assistance provided to the children by the other state. The supplemental medical assistance will cover medical expenses that are neither covered by the resident state's Medicaid program nor the parents' private insurance.

Interstate agreements entered into by the secretary have the effect of law.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Thirty states have interstate compacts. Participants in the adoption assistance program often have difficulty receiving medical coverage in another state.

By creating uniform procedures for handling adoption assistance for relocated families, the bill will allow these families to receive certain, continuous assistance.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Jennifer Strus, Department of Social and Health Services (pro).