

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2520

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Children's Services

Title: An act relating to creating a domestic violence pilot program to colocate a domestic violence advocate in a department of social and health services office.

Brief Description: Creating a domestic violence pilot program to colocate a domestic violence advocate in a department of social and health services office.

Sponsors: Representatives Schual-Berke, Hudgins, Pedersen, Dickerson, Hasegawa, Walsh, Campbell, VanDeWege, Lias, Barlow, Green and Kelley.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Children's Services: 1/17/08, 1/24/08 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Establishes a pilot program to co-locate a domestic violence advocate in one office of the Children's Administration of the Department of Social and Health Services.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & CHILDREN'S SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Roberts, Vice Chair; Haler, Ranking Minority Member; Walsh, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Goodman, Hinkle and Pettigrew.

Staff: Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

Background:

Studies from the Child Welfare League of America show that child abuse occurs in 30 percent - 60 percent of domestic violence cases involving families with children. Between 1.5 million and 3.3 million children witness some form of violence at home each year. In one nationwide survey of 6,000 families, researchers found that 50 percent of men who frequently assault their wives also frequently abuse their children.

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.

The Children's Administration (CA) has undertaken a number of steps to provide training on domestic violence issues to child protection and child welfare workers. The CA Social Worker Academy attended by all incoming caseworkers includes three hours of training specific to issues relating to domestic violence and child welfare. Beginning in 2006 the CA began partnering with the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence (Coalition) to design collaborative training opportunities. In 2007 the CA and the Coalition jointly presented two two-day statewide training seminars for Child Protective Services (CPS) staff and domestic violence program community providers.

The CA is working with the Coalition to establish domestic violence-related policies and to develop a guide for case workers to use in their child welfare work. The Coalition also is assisting the CA in development of a stand-alone training component specific to domestic violence and how it impacts child welfare. That training component is planned for implementation in 2009. The CA also has signed a letter of support for the Coalition's application for a grant that if received, would provide for domestic violence advocates in five rural county CA offices.

In addition to the initiatives undertaken by the CA, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Domestic Violence Program provides support for community-based shelters, emergency counseling, and legal advocacy for children and families who have experienced domestic violence. The DSHS also sets minimum standards for domestic violence perpetrator programs and certifies provider programs.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Creation of the Pilot

The DSHS is required to create a pilot program to place a domestic violence advocate (Advocate) in a minimum of one CA office serving children and families. The express purpose of the program is to provide domestic violence safety planning, advocacy, information, and support to adult victims of domestic violence who are receiving services and to identify and respond effectively to domestic violence in child welfare caseloads.

The CA must use a request for proposal process and must select the site by September 2008. Specific criteria must be included in the request for proposal including experience providing domestic violence shelter or advocacy services and experience working with families involved with child protection or child welfare services.

The DSHS is required to convene quarterly meetings to provide suggestions on the implementation and progress of the pilot program. The group must include representation from: a local domestic violence agency; a public health entity; a domestic violence perpetrator treatment program; a protection order program; a law enforcement entity; the Coalition; and others as appropriate.

Respective Duties of Advocate and Site Supervisor

The Advocate co-located in the CA office must provide onsite education, consultation, and support to site staff to meet the needs of children and families presenting with domestic violence situations. The Advocate may not provide case consultation for any family to whom he/she is providing direct services and may not provide direct services to any family for whose case he/she is providing consultation.

The supervisor responsible for working with the Advocate at the site selected must be someone who has participated in best practices work groups for domestic violence issues and who has formal training and experience working with families affected by domestic violence and child maltreatment, or someone who has helped with development of protocols for multi-system response to domestic violence and child welfare cases.

Program Goals

Eight goals for the program are articulated as follows:

- (1) increase the safety of children and adult victims of domestic violence who are involved with the DSHS's CPS division;
- (2) increase the adult domestic violence victim's understanding of available domestic violence resources and supports;
- (3) increase the adult domestic violence victim's and the domestic violence perpetrator's understanding of the effects of domestic violence on children;
- (4) provide consultation and training to CPS case workers so that they may increase their knowledge of domestic violence and practice skills for addressing domestic violence in their caseloads, and provide safe, effective responses for children and their families experiencing domestic violence;
- (5) decrease the rate at which victims of domestic violence are referred back to the Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS);
- (6) decrease the number of children of domestic violence victims that are placed in protective custody;
- (7) strengthen collaborations between the DSHS staff and community providers and resources; and
- (8) conduct an evaluation of the program by comparing the outcomes of the program office to the outcomes of a comparison office that does not have the domestic violence advocate, and to develop a report of the findings and recommendations that may be used to replicate the program statewide.

Program Evaluation

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (Institute) shall evaluate the pilot program. Evaluation shall include preprogram assessment, including comparison of the pilot site to another CA office serving children and families where a domestic violence advocate is not co-located. Following the preprogram assessment, the Institute must evaluate the pilot program based on 10 specified program outcomes. The Institute must use the results of the evaluation to identify effectiveness of the program, including effectiveness of training, consultation, and advocacy services; changes in social worker practices; improvements in services to families; barriers to implementing program services; and service gaps for families

affected by domestic violence. A report from the Institute to the Legislature is due December 1, 2011.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill:

- (1) removes four of the 11 expressly stated goals of the pilot program relating to the functioning of the DCFS;
- (2) removes the requirement for DCFS to convene an advisory group with specific representation and instead requires quarterly meetings at the program site for interested stakeholders to provide suggestions on implementation of the program;
- (3) clarifies and reduces the qualifications of the DCFS supervisor at the program site to include those supervisors who may not have had formal training in the area of domestic violence (DV), but who have participated in development of coordinated multi-system response protocols for DV and child maltreatment;
- (4) reduces the duties required of the program site DCFS supervisor;
- (5) removes eight of the 10 points of comparison which must be addressed by the Washington State Institute of Public Policy (WSIPP) in its evaluation of the pilot program; and
- (6) removes the requirement for the WSIPP to use the results of the evaluation to identify the effectiveness of the program in various practice and service areas.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available on the original bill. Requested on the substitute bill on January 25, 2008.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill is a result of much work done over the interim on a similar bill heard last year. Earlier concerns and costs have been addressed in this version of the bill. This bill builds upon similar models where substance abuse specialists are co-located in child welfare offices. Domestic violence (DV) is associated with poor outcomes for children and this bill will help address the connections between DV and child welfare. In those homes where adults use violence as a means of relating to one another, there is a high probability children will also be abused. There are long-term implications for children who witness DV in their homes.

The benefits of co-location include better ability to collaborate and work more efficiently across systems and disciplines on behalf of children and families. When workers from various systems have a clear picture of the role and responsibility of workers from other systems, the coordinated response by all systems is greatly strengthened.

This bill takes an important step toward ending the inter-generational cycle of violence in families. When child welfare workers are working side-by-side with DV advocates, we have the best opportunity to strengthen both systems to support survivors in keeping themselves and their children safe from further abuse and to hold DV perpetrators accountable.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Schual-Berke, prime sponsor; Susan Adams and Crystal Judson, Family Justice Center; Debora Greenleaf, Public Health of Seattle and King County; Terri Kimball, City of Seattle; Ann Lokey; Jay Olson, ConAm Management; and Kip Tokuda, City of Seattle.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.