

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2449

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to extending the timeline for completing a family assessment response.

Brief Description: Extending the timeline for completing a family assessment response.

Sponsors: Representatives Senn, Kagi, Kilduff, Dent and Goodman.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 1/12/18, 1/16/18 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/5/18, 2/6/18 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Extends the timeline for which family assessment response services can be offered with parental agreement from 90 days to 120 days.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Family Assessment Response.

In 2014 the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) began implementation of a differential response system for responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect with low to moderate risk of child maltreatment called family assessment response (FAR). The FAR services were phased-in throughout the state until full implementation was completed on June 1, 2017.

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.

Upon receiving a report of child abuse or neglect that screens in for a response, the DSHS must either refer the case for investigation or FAR. The DSHS developed a method by which to assign cases to investigation or FAR. Cases must be referred for investigation when the assessment determines that there is a risk of imminent harm to the child, a serious threat of substantial harm to the child, the conduct constitutes criminal activity, the child is abandoned, the child is dependent, or in a facility licensed by the DSHS or the Department of Early Learning.

The DSHS must complete FAR services within 45 days of receiving the child abuse and neglect report, and parents may agree to extend the response period up to 90 days. Parents must agree to participate in FAR services before services begin.

Summary of Bill:

The length of time that Family Assessment Response services can be offered with parental agreement is increased from 90 to 120 days.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Many families are unable to participate in evidence-based services because of the 90-day time limit. Everyone who comes into FAR would either receive FAR or an investigation; so if FAR was not available, there would still be a fiscal impact in the investigation. Any increased cost related to longer time periods for FAR would be well worth it for rewards in child and family safety.

The ability for families to receive services related to trauma and other family support will be helpful for families. This increased time frame will better allow for the delivery of that support.

There are various evidence-based programs, and many of them go beyond 90 days. By the time a referral is received by a service provider, at least one week has already passed. Extending the time limit will allow families to participate in evidence-based programs through FAR. There is a compelling rationale based on the data to support FAR. In-home services budgets have been underspent for many years.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) The majority of child protective services cases in Washington do not involve abuse, but neglect. It is difficult to assume that these concerns can be addressed between a 45 to 90 day period. There is a need to limit this time period to protect the privacy and sanctity of the family, but the proposed increase in the time period should not affect that privacy and sanctity because the service is voluntary.

Without the Legislature, FAR would not have happened or have been successful. It is difficult to determine how many families would take advantage of an increased time frame.

Persons Testifying: (In support) Representative Senn, prime sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; Tami Rean; and Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development.

(Other) Patrick Dowd, Office of the Family and Children's Ombuds; and David Del Villar Fox, Department of Social and Health Services.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Graves, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Staff: Mary Mulholland (786-7391).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Early Learning & Human Services:

The Family Assessment Response (FAR) services provided within the extended time frame must be provided within amounts appropriate solely for FAR.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The intent of FAR is to prevent families from coming into dependency court and to instead provide timely support when families are in crisis. Parent allies interviewed parents exiting FAR, and those FAR parents express that the intervention is helpful but that a longer timeframe would be beneficial. When families do not receive timely support, the cost

to the state can be higher as it relates to social services, court costs, and foster care costs. The Legislature can help break the cycle of child welfare system involvement.

It takes time for the Children's Administration case worker to assess the family and identify the evidence-based practices (EBPs) that would be most helpful for them. Right now, fewer than 3 percent of families receive an EBP, and fewer than 10 percent of families receive a paid in-home service.

It is important to note that FAR is a pathway in Child Protective Services (CPS). Families who screen in to CPS are referred to either FAR, or traditional investigation. Without the FAR option, families would be referred for investigation. The FAR pathway helps avoid out-of-home placement. The Children's Administration has indicated that they can absorb the cost within their existing appropriation. No one would become entitled to an EBP. The opportunity for a longer period of service delivery will promote a more successful FAR intervention.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Alise Morrissey, Children's Home Society of Washington; Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children; and Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development and Washington Association for Children and Families.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.