

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 2449

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

**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].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

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

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### 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.

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

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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.

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**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.

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**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.