

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1609

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

Title: An act relating to conducting an evaluation of resource and assessment centers.

Brief Description: Conducting an evaluation of resource and assessment centers.

Sponsors: Representatives Van Werven, Shewmake and Eslick.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services & Early Learning: 2/8/19, 2/13/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Requires the Washington State Institute for Public Policy to evaluate the outcomes of resource and assessment centers contracted by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) and provide a report to the Oversight Board for Children, Youth, and Families, the DCYF, the Legislature, and the Governor by December 1, 2020.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Callan, Vice Chair; Frame, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Corry, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Child Welfare.

If an individual suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, that abuse or neglect can be reported to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Protective

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Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. There are many individuals who are required by law to report suspected abuse or neglect.

The CPS will then determine whether the report of child abuse or neglect is credible and whether the report meets the sufficiency screening criteria. If the report meets the screening criteria, CPS will assign either: (1) a 24-hour response that includes an investigation; or (2) a family assessment response for low to moderate risk allegations that requires a 72-hour response.

The DCYF, or anyone else, can file a court petition alleging that the child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because no parent, guardian, or custodian is capable of adequately caring for the child. A court will hold a shelter care hearing following removal of a child from his or her home within 72 hours. At this hearing, the court will determine if the child can return home safely.

Out-of-Home Care.

When children are removed from the home of a parent or guardian due to allegations of abuse or neglect, those children may be placed with relatives or in foster care. Relatives care for almost half the children placed in out-of-home care and are required to meet certain safety requirements but are not required to be licensed. Foster parents may pursue licensure by either the DCYF or private child-placing agencies and provide temporary care to children with the goal of reunifying the child with his or her parent or guardian.

Resource and Assessment Centers.

The purpose of the resource and assessment center is to provide short-term emergency and crisis care for children who are:

- removed from their parent's or guardian's care due to suspected abuse or neglect; and
- in immediate need of health care or social services.

Services provided by a center may not substitute for a crisis residential center, HOPE center, family reconciliation services, or other child welfare or family reconciliation-related service.

Resource and assessment centers may be licensed by the DCYF when:

- there is a need in the community for the service;
- the center is primarily staffed by a volunteer; and
- the center demonstrates that it is not financially dependent on reimbursement from the state.

There are currently three licensed resource and assessment facilities in the state to include:

- Vanessa Behan Crisis Nursery in Spokane, which is licensed for up to 12 children ages 0-7;
- Hand in Hand Safe Place in Everett, which is licensed for up to six children ages 0-18; and
- Skookum Kids in Bellingham, which is licensed for up six children ages 0-7.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) must evaluate the outcomes of resource and assessment centers contracted by the DCYF and provide a report to the Oversight Board for the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the Legislature, and the Governor by December 1, 2020, which would include:

- the type of placement children experience following placement at a resource and assessment center;
- the number of placement changes that children experience following placement in a resource and assessment center compared with other foster youth;
- the length of stay in foster care that children experience following placement in a resource and assessment center compared with other foster youth;
- the likelihood that children placed in a resource and assessment center will be placed with siblings; and
- the length of time that foster families accepting children placed in resource and assessment centers continue to foster children compared to foster families receiving children directly from CPS.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill delayed the WSIPP reporting date from December 1, 2019, to December 1, 2020.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2019.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill will study the outcomes of resource and assessment centers. Resource and assessment centers serve children in their first few days in foster care processing the trauma that they have experienced. These centers provide a soft landing for foster youth. Resource and assessment centers are some of the only services like this in the country, and there is a belief that youth served by these centers have higher outcomes across the board; an evaluation could provide this information. Without looking at the outcomes of the children served by resource and assessment centers, it is not known the concrete impact of these centers. The WSIPP is the appropriate entity to assess these programs. Resource and assessment centers are more cost effective than hotel stays.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Van Werven, prime sponsor; and Mikaela Chandler, Skookum Kids.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.