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**Children, Youth & Families Committee**

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**HB 1945**

**Brief Description:** Improving communication between the department of children, youth, and families and caregivers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dent, Sutherland, Wicks and Robertson.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) to develop and implement a caregiver liaison program for the purpose of improving communication between the DCYF and caregivers caring for children receiving child welfare services.
- Requires the DCYF to submit a report to describing how to implement an automated notification system that would provide electronic or telephonic notification to caregivers of children receiving child welfare services.

**Hearing Date:** 1/26/22

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

**Background:**

*Child Welfare Services.*

Child welfare services refer to services, including voluntary and in-home services, out-of-home care, case management, and adoption services which strengthen, supplement, or substitute for, parental care and supervision for the purpose of preventing or remedying problems which may result in family conflict, neglect, or abuse, and providing adequate care for children away from their homes in foster homes, day care, or other child care agencies or facilities.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

The investigation into whether child abuse or neglect occurred, referred to as child protective services, is not considered a child welfare service.

Caregivers caring for a child receiving child welfare services could include parents, relatives or other suitable persons, foster parents, and group homes.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must develop and implement a caregiver liaison program for the purpose of improving communication between the DCYF and caregivers. The caregiver liaison program is responsible for:

- assisting caregivers in promptly communicating with caregivers of children receiving child welfare services;
- developing policies for sharing appropriate and timely information with such caregivers; and
- directly communicating with those caregivers when an individual caseworker is unable to promptly communicate.

By October 1, 2022, the DCYF must submit a report to the Legislature and Governor describing:

- how the DCYF could implement an automated notification system that would provide electronic or telephonic notification to caregivers of children receiving child welfare services regarding upcoming changes in placement, court hearings, or other relevant information; and
- any statutory, policy, or funding changes needed to accomplish this notification system.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 21, 2022.

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