

FINAL BILL REPORT

ESHB 2256

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Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Addressing the children and youth behavioral health work group.

Sponsors: House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning (originally sponsored by Representatives Callan, Eslick, Senn, Davis, Paul, Thai, Ormsby, Pollet and Macri).

House Committee on Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning
Senate Committee on Human Services

Background:

Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group.

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (Work Group) was established to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, accessing behavioral health services for children and their families and advise the Legislature on statewide behavioral health services for those children and families. There are 38 members of the Work Group, including legislators, representatives from state agencies, providers, parent and child representatives, and advocates.

The cochairs of the Work Group are selected by the Work Group members and must include one legislative member and one executive branch member. At the direction of the cochairs of the Work Group, the Work Group may convene advisory groups to evaluate specific issues and report related findings and recommendations to the full Work Group. The Work Group is required to convene an advisory group for the purpose of developing a behavioral health strategic plan. This strategic plan advisory committee must complete the strategic plan by October 1, 2024.

The Work Group must submit annual recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature. The Work Group expires December 30, 2026.

Summary:

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 goals of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group (Work Group) are expanded to include strengthening and building a coordinated systemic approach to providing behavioral health care and supports that ensure that all children, youth, young adults, and their families have timely access to high quality, equitable, well-resourced behavioral health education, care, and supports across the continuum when and where they need it, including prenatal care.

The Work Group membership is modified to:

- allow the Governor to appoint additional representatives from state agencies;
- include three youth or young adult representatives who have experience with behavioral health issues as members;
- allow the cochairs of the Work Group to request that the Governor appoint additional members;
- allow the Governor to consult with the cochairs regarding discretionary additional membership appointments beyond what are required in statute;
- limit newly appointed work group member terms to three years and allow existing members to remain in their positions until January 1, 2027; and
- add a member representing the educational service districts.

The Work Group cochair designation is modified to specify that the nonlegislative cochair must be the representative from the Health Care Authority (current law allows the nonlegislative cochair to be selected from among the executive branch members).

The requirements of the Work Group are expanded to include determining the strategies and resources needed to achieve parity of private health insurance coverage for behavioral health conditions with the coverage provided for other health conditions.

The School-based Behavioral Health and Suicide Prevention Advisory Group is modified to:

- expand its scope to include preschool through twelfth grade (instead of kindergarten through twelfth grade); and
- require that it consider the broader behavioral health issues impacting children, youth, and families, while focusing on the issues that are unique to children and families that interface with schools.

The Work Group cochairs must appoint a chair for the Strategic Plan Advisory Group.

The Strategic Plan Advisory Group Draft Strategic Plan is modified to remove an incremental action plan outlining the action steps needed to achieve the vision provided by the draft strategic plan, clear prioritization criteria, and a transparent evaluation plan. This strategic plan must be developed in coordination with the Joint Legislative and Executive Committee on Behavioral Health and the Department of Health and the Health Care Authority in relation to the implementation of the 988 Crisis Hotline. The deadline for the advisory group to submit this strategic plan is delayed from October 1, 2024, to August 1,

2025.

The expiration of the Work Group is delayed from December 30, 2026, to December 30, 2029.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 93 4

Senate 49 0

Effective: June 6, 2024