

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6111

*As Passed House - Amended
March 5, 1992*

Title: An act relating to family preservation services.

Brief Description: Providing family preservation services.

Sponsor(s): By Senate Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Senators Craswell, Wojahn, Rasmussen, Roach, Stratton, Owen and Oke).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, February 24, 1992, DPA;
Passed House, March 5, 1992, 98-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 11 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Riley, Vice Chair; Winsley, Ranking Minority Member; Tate, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Anderson; Beck; Brekke; Hargrove; Hochstatter; R. King; and H. Myers.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

Background: Family preservation services are brief, comprehensive, and highly intensive services which are designed to: 1) avoid foster care placements for children; 2) return children to home from foster care; 3) improve overall family functioning; and 4) promote the children's health, safety, and welfare. The services are provided by specially trained caseworkers who offer services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In 1974, the first family preservation services, known as Homebuilders, were delivered in Pierce County through a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The state began funding for family preservation services in King County in 1979. The Legislature has now funded programs in 11 counties: Pierce, King, Spokane, Snohomish, Kitsap, Whitman, Yakima, Thurston, Skagit, Jefferson, and Clark. Due to the success at preventing out-of-home placements, at least 31 states have initiated pilot family preservation programs.

It has been suggested that the Department of Social and Health Services should develop a plan for the statewide implementation of family preservation services.

Summary of Bill: A statutory program of family preservation services is established. The Department of Social and Health Services is granted the authority to plan and implement a phased-in program on a statewide basis.

The characteristics of the services are specified and include: 1) training requirements; 2) caseload limitations; 3) authority for expending funds; 4) availability of services within 24 hours of referral; 5) service availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week; 6) duration of services; and 7) service strategies. Eligibility requirements for family preservation services are also specified.

The department shall, in consultation with recognized experts, develop and conduct a family preservation services study in at least one region within the state. The study shall include service needs, budget implications, and long-range planning. A report on the study findings is due to the Legislature by January 1, 1993.

The act's implementation provisions are subject to the availability of funds. The department may solicit and use any available federal or private resources available for family preservation services, including funds, in-kind resources, or volunteer services. The department may also use any available state in-kind resources or volunteer services.

The secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to transfer funds from foster care to family preservation services. The Juvenile Issues Task Force will study issues related to the transfer of funds and report its findings and recommendations to the appropriate committees of the House and Senate by December 15, 1992.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: The state should invest as many resources in helping families resolve problems as it does in placing children in foster and group care. Family preservation services can resolve most family problems which currently result in children being placed in foster or group care.

Testimony Against: None.

Witnesses: Clarice McCartan, Developmental Disabilities Planning Council; Charlotte Booth, Behavioral Sciences Institute; Margaret Casey, Children's Alliance; and Helen Johnson and Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society.