

HOUSE BILL REPORT

ESHB 1884

As Passed Legislature

Title: An act relating to domestic violence.

Brief Description: Providing for domestic violence programs and community response.

Sponsor(s): By House Committee on Judiciary (originally sponsored by Representatives Ebersole, Forner, Belcher, Locke, Spanel, Peery, Phillips, H. Myers, Riley, R. Johnson, Paris, Wineberry, Ogden, Ludwig, Edmondson, Zellinsky, Brough, Jacobsen, Nelson, Miller, Holland, Winsley, Roland, Hine, Brekke, Rasmussen, Fraser, Mitchell and Orr).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Judiciary, March 5, 1991, DPS;
Appropriations, March 9, 1991, DPS(JUD)-A;
Passed House, March 19, 1991, 97-0;
Amended by Senate;
House concurred;
Passed Legislature, 94-0.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
JUDICIARY**

Majority Report: *That Substitute House Bill No. 1884 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.*
Signed by 19 members: Representatives Appelwick, Chair; Ludwig, Vice Chair; Padden, Ranking Minority Member; Paris, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Belcher; Broback; Forner; Hargrove; Inslee; Locke; R. Meyers; Mielke; H. Myers; Riley; Scott; D. Sommers; Tate; Vance; and Wineberry.

Staff: Pat Shelledy (786-7149).

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
APPROPRIATIONS**

Majority Report: *The substitute bill by Committee on Judiciary be substituted therefor and the substitute bill as amended by Committee on Appropriations do pass.* Signed by 27 members: Representatives Locke, Chair; Inslee, Vice Chair; Spanel, Vice Chair; Silver, Ranking Minority Member; Morton, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Appelwick;

Belcher; Bowman; Braddock; Dorn; Ebersole; Ferguson; Fuhrman; Hine; May; McLean; Mielke; Nealey; Peery; Pruitt; Rust; H. Sommers; Sprenkle; Valle; Vance; Wang; and Wineberry.

Staff: Maureen Morris (786-7152).

Background: The Human Services Roundtable, which is comprised of voluntary local organizations, met for a period of two years and worked with criminal justice representatives, victim advocates, health care providers, and others to develop recommendations for a comprehensive coordinated community response to domestic violence. The roundtable has made a number of recommendations for development of new programs, expanded funding of existing programs, further research of domestic violence and related issues, and recommendations for substantive changes in the law.

Some of the existing programs include grant programs to local shelters through the Department of Social and Health Services and victims compensation funding to victims of domestic violence.

Victims of domestic violence may receive money through crime victims compensation for certain services. However, victims may not receive compensation under the program if the victim consented, provoked, or incited the act that led to the injury for which the victim seeks compensation.

Last year, the Legislature authorized the counties to impose an optional local sales and use tax. Any revenues generated under the tax are to be used exclusively for criminal justice purposes, and may not replace or supplant existing funding.

The Domestic Violence Protection Act provides a procedure for a person who is a victim of domestic violence to obtain an order for protection in a civil proceeding.

If a criminal proceeding is pending or a person is sentenced for an act of domestic violence, the victim may obtain a no-contact order through the criminal proceeding. Various crimes are considered "domestic violence" when the crime is committed by one family member against another. Under those acts, the term "family or household members" means "adult persons" related by blood or marriage, persons who are presently residing together, or who have resided together in the past, and persons who have a child in common. The definition is ambiguous about whether the act governs juveniles.

Assaults range from gross misdemeanors to class A felonies depending upon the seriousness of the assault. Certain assaults that would ordinarily be considered gross misdemeanors are increased to class C felony status for various reasons, such as the assault occurred against an officer in the performance of the officer's duties, or the assault occurred against a bus driver while the bus was moving and other passengers were aboard. A class C felony carries a maximum penalty of five years in custody, although the sentencing reform act ranges would determine the actual range. Reckless endangerment may be a gross misdemeanor which carries a maximum penalty of one year in jail or a class C felony, depending on the degree of crime. Currently, the class of the assault on reckless endangerment does not increase when the crime was committed in violation of a protective or no-contact order.

Certain confidentiality statutes exist that prohibit dissemination of records maintained by an agency about the treatment of a victim. For example, a statute exists that restricts dissemination by a rape crisis center of the records concerning a rape victim unless a specific procedure is followed by a court upon motion for review of the records. No similar provision exists for maintaining the confidentiality of records that may be maintained by a domestic violence program. The public disclosure laws do not specifically exempt these records from public disclosure and copying laws.

Parents who abuse their children and who are ordered removed from the home must obtain treatment prior to returning home. The parent must pay for the treatment according to a schedule established by the Department of Social and Health Services based on the parent's ability to pay.

Summary of Bill:

1. Legislative Findings. The Legislature makes a number of findings about the severity of the problem of domestic violence, the need for an integrated and adequately funded system to assure a wide range of services, the need for establishing quality standards for treatment programs, training of professionals, and further research. The Legislature also finds that the perpetrator's alcohol and substance abuse may be a contributing factor to domestic violence.

2. Victims compensation - restriction on compensation when victim consented or provoked the violence. The restriction on receiving crime victims compensation funds when the victim consented, provoked, or incited the act resulting in injury is amended to provide that, when determining whether

the victim consented or provoked the act, the reviewer should reasonably review the police report and in cases of domestic violence make an assessment that considers who was the primary physical aggressor. These provisions are contingent on funding in the budget.

3. Victims compensation - counseling and benefits for the victim and family members. Victims of domestic violence are entitled to receive appropriate counseling. Fees for the counseling will be determined by the Department of Labor and Industries in accordance with existing laws for determining fees for services. The benefits for the victim must be based upon the entire abusive relationship for which the victim claims benefits. These provisions are contingent on funding in the budget.

4. Technical assistance program. The Department of Social and Health Services must establish a local assistance program to assist local communities in determining how to respond to domestic violence. A county or a group of counties can apply for technical assistance grants to develop a comprehensive plan for dealing with domestic violence. These provisions are contingent on funding in the budget.

5. Use of optional sales tax revenues for domestic violence advocates. The use of the local optional sales tax that was enacted during the 1990 session for the exclusive use of criminal justice purposes is amended to include funding for domestic violence community advocates who are employed by local domestic violence programs to provide ongoing assistance to victims of domestic violence if prior to the effective date of this provision and prior to voter approval, the legislative authority of the county adopted by ordinance a financial plan that included expenditure of a portion of the moneys received for the advocates.

6. Department of Social and Health Services standards for programs that treat batterers. The Department of Social and Health Services must adopt rules for standards of approval of domestic violence programs that treat batterers. The programs must: (1) provide treatment that meets certain minimum qualifications, including consideration of a variety of diagnostic tools, length of treatment, and type of treatment; (2) require the batterer to sign release of information forms; (3) have policies and procedures for dealing with reoffenses; (4) provide criteria for completion of treatment; and (5) have qualified personnel to evaluate and treat the batterers. These provisions are contingent on funding in the budget.

7. Department of Health study regarding certification of domestic violence perpetrator counselors. The Department of Health must conduct a study to determine whether counselors who treat domestic violence perpetrators should be certified. The department must conduct the study in accordance with provisions enacted in 1990 that provide that the Legislature intends not to regulate health professions except for the purpose of protecting the public interest.

8. Treatment of parents removed from the home. Parents who abuse their children and who must obtain treatment prior to returning home must pay for the treatment services unless otherwise eligible for financial assistance. Nothing in the section creates an entitlement to the services or to financial assistance.

9. Null and void clauses. The crime victims compensation provisions, the requirement that the Department of Social and Health Services adopt standards for approval of domestic violence perpetrator programs, and the technical assistance grant program, are null and void if funding is not provided in the budget.

10. Establishing a class C felony assault for assaults committed in violation of a protective order. An assault that is committed in violation of a no-contact order issued under a criminal action for a crime involving domestic violence or an ex-parte or permanent protective order issued under the Domestic Violence Protection Act is a class C felony, except assault in the first or second degree which are class A and B felonies respectively.

11. Reckless endangerment for recklessly endangering a person in violation of a protective order. A person is guilty of a class C felony, if the person recklessly engages in conduct which creates a substantial risk of death or serious physical injury to another person and the conduct is in violation of a no-contact order issued under a criminal action for a crime involving domestic violence or an ex-parte or permanent protective order issued under the Domestic Violence Protection Act.

12. Adding reckless endangerment in the first degree to the list of domestic violence crimes. Reckless endangerment in the first degree is added to the list of crimes that are defined as a crime of domestic violence when the crime is committed by one family or household member against another.

13. Changing the definition of "family or household members" in the civil and criminal statutes on domestic violence. The definition of "family or household members" is amended to provide that the term does not apply to juveniles unless

the juveniles have a child in common, are spouses or former spouses.

14. Confidentiality of client records maintained by domestic violence programs. The records maintained by a domestic violence program, which is defined as an agency that provides shelter, advocacy, and counseling for domestic violence victims, are confidential and may not be released except under certain circumstances: A written pretrial motion supported by affidavit states the reason for the discovery request, the court examines the records in camera to determine whether the probative value of the records outweighs the victim's privacy interest in maintaining confidentiality, and the court enters an order setting forth which portions of the records are subject to discovery and sets forth the reasons in writing. The public disclosure law is amended to provide domestic violence program records and rape crisis center records are not subject to the public disclosure laws.

15. Domestic Violence Shelters Act definitions. The Domestic Violence Shelter Act's definition section is amended to define community advocate, domestic violence programs, and legal advocate.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except the certification of counselors study which is effective immediately.

Testimony For: (Judiciary) Original Bill: Domestic violence is a pervasive and severe problem that requires a comprehensive community approach. The recommendations begin to implement that comprehensive approach.

(Appropriations) Domestic violence is a serious problem in Washington. About 1,800 individuals receive emergency shelter and related services each month. It is estimated that 10,000 individuals are turned away because of limited shelter resources. Expansion of crime victims services through shelters and The Crime Victims Program is needed.

Testimony Against: (Judiciary) Original Bill: The governor's budget has not provided funding for the expanded programs. Regarding the certification of counselors who treat batterers, the Department of Health should review the proposal prior to adoption in compliance with a law enacted in 1990 that requires the department to review any regulation of a health profession to determine if the regulation is necessary to protect the public.

(Appropriations) None.

Witnesses: (Judiciary) Original Bill: PRO: Mike Ryherd, Human Services Roundtable; Judy Clibborn, Human Services Roundtable; Judge Carolyn Hayek, Federal Way District Court; Sheila Hargesheimer, Seattle City Attorney's Office; Gary Benton, Domestic Violence Intervention Committee; Gary Schauls, Seattle Municipal Probation Department, Nancy Ashley, Human Services Roundtable; Karen Reagan, Eastside Domestic Violence, Mary Pontarolo, Washington Coalition Against Domestic Violence; and Gloria Hemmen, Gender and Justice Implementation Committee. CON: Mary Ault, Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Children and Family Services (supports concept, but funding for bill is not in governor's budget). INFORMATION ONLY, WITH CONCERNS: Sherman Cox, Department of Health (addressing certifications); and Chris Rose, Department of Health (addressing certifications).

(Appropriations) Mike Ryherd, Human Services Round Table. The Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence provided written testimony.