

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2472

AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES,  
FEBRUARY 26, 1992

**Brief Description:** Providing family preservation services.

**SPONSORS:** House Committee on Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Ebersole, Winsley, Leonard, P. Johnson, Braddock, Anderson, Ludwig, J. Kohl and H. Myers)

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES**

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

**Majority Report:** Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Craswell, and Stratton.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass as amended.

Signed by Senator Talmadge.

**Staff:** Richard Rodger (786-7461)

**Hearing Dates:** February 25, 1992; February 26, 1992

**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:**

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) referrals are made on a 24-hour intake basis; 5) availability of services within 24 hours of referral; 6) service availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week; 7) services are provided within the home; 8) each family is attended to by one caseworker; 9) duration of services; and 10) service strategies. Eligibility requirements for family preservation services are also specified.

The department may provide family reconciliation services directly, or contract with nonprofit social service agencies to provide the services. The department's provision of services shall not be used to supplant existing contracts.

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 department is authorized to transfer funds from foster care services to family preservation services when a child is in imminent risk of foster care placement. The department shall notify the Juvenile Justice Task Force (JITF) of any fund transfers and other related data. The JITF shall review the data and make findings and recommendations to the Legislature by December 15, 1992.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested January 24, 1992

**SUMMARY OF PROPOSED SENATE AMENDMENTS:**

The department may transfer funds from foster care after July 1, 1993. The department shall notify the legislative committees of the transfers along with other related data.

The JITF shall: (a) review the advisability of transferring funds from foster care to family preservation services; (b) identify ways to improve foster care; and (c) identify ways to expand family preservation services.

**TESTIMONY FOR:**

If family preservation services were available to children and families in crisis, up to 70 percent of placements into foster care could be prevented. Family preservation services represent the most sophisticated social service technology available to strengthen and prevent out of home placement.

**TESTIMONY AGAINST:** None

**TESTIFIED:** PRO: Charlotte Booth, Behavioral Sciences; Darlene Flowers, Director of the Foster Parent Assn. of WA State; Thomas Rembiera, Federation of Residential Care Providers