

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1223

As of March 24, 2003

Title: An act relating to placing jurisdiction over deceased minors with the county coroner.

Brief Description: Placing jurisdiction over deceased minors with the county coroner.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Dickerson, Kagi, Chase, Cody and Lovick).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Government Operations & Elections: 3/25/03.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ELECTIONS

Staff: Mac Nicholson (786-7445)

Background: The county coroner has jurisdiction over bodies of deceased persons who die through a variety of statutorily listed circumstances. The coroner may authorize an autopsy or post mortem in any case in which the coroner has jurisdiction over the body. Records of the autopsies or post mortems are confidential and may only be released to those parties authorized by statute. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is not on the list of those authorized to receive reports and records of autopsies and post mortems.

Summary of Bill: Cases in which the deceased is a minor are included in the list of circumstances where the county coroner is given jurisdiction over the body. The coroner must promptly notify DSHS that the coroner has received notice of a minor's death. DSHS is not required to investigate the circumstances of a child's death or otherwise provide child protective services beyond that required by Chapter 26.44 RCW (abuse of children). DSHS is not required to keep a record of every child death notice. A record must be kept only when it is determined that abuse or neglect caused or contributed to the child's death, or in cases involving a minor for whom DSHS has previously had an open child protection or child welfare case.

DSHS is authorized to receive reports and records of autopsies and post mortems in cases involving the death of a minor where abuse or neglect of the child may have caused or contributed to the death, or in cases where DSHS has an open child protection or child welfare case on the deceased minor or had an open case in the year preceding the death of the minor. In DSHS initiated investigations, DSHS may share the coroner's documents with the investigators as a part of the investigation process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

