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**Children & Family Services  
Committee**

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**SSB 5407**

**Brief Description:** Establishing an interagency plan for children of incarcerated parents.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Delvin, Hargrove, Regala, Roach, Kohl-Welles, Keiser, Kline and McAuliffe).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires the Department of Corrections to establish an oversight committee to develop a comprehensive interagency plan to provide the necessary services and supports for children whose parents are incarcerated.

**Hearing Date:** March 17, 2005.

**Staff:** Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

**Background:**

According to the Justice Department's Bureau of Justice Statistics, an estimated two percent of the nation's 72 million children under 18 years of age had an imprisoned parent in 1999. During that same year, an estimated 721,500 federal and state prisoners had minor children. Almost 1.5 million minor children had a parent in prison, which constitutes an increase of more than 500,000 children since 1991. Of those children with imprisoned parents, 58 percent were under 10 years of age with the average being 8 years of age.

Nationwide, 40 percent of the imprisoned fathers and 60 percent of the mothers reported weekly contact with their children by phone, mail, or visit. However, a majority of both fathers (57 percent) and mothers (54 percent) reported never having had a personal visit with their children since their admission to state prison. More than 60 percent of the parents in state prisons reported being held more than 100 miles from their last place of residence.

**Summary of Bill:**

The Department of Corrections (DOC), in partnership with the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), is required to establish an oversight committee to develop a comprehensive interagency plan to provide the necessary services and supports for the children of this state whose parents are incarcerated in jail or prison.

The interagency plan must include the following:

- identification of existing state services and programs, as well as recognized community-based services and programs, for children whose parents are incarcerated;
- identification of methods to improve collaboration and coordination of existing services and programs;
- recommendations concerning new services and programs for children whose parents are incarcerated, involving both interagency and community-based efforts; and
- identification of evidence-based practices and areas for further research to support the long-term provision of services and programs for children whose parents are incarcerated, including the following:
  - identification and ongoing collection of data relating to incarcerated individuals in the state who have children under 18 years of age; and
  - identification and sharing of information relating to children of incarcerated parents who are involved in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems, to the extent permissible under state and federal law.

The oversight committee must include the following:

- representatives with decision-making authority of: the DOC, the Children's Administration of the DSHS, the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration of the DSHS, the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the courts, prosecuting attorneys and public defenders, and community-based agencies working with families of individuals who are incarcerated; and
- caregivers of children whose parents are incarcerated.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available on original bill.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.