

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6891

As Passed Senate, February 19, 2008

Title: An act relating to children's administration social workers.

Brief Description: Requiring certain hiring and training practices for children's administration social workers.

Sponsors: Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Carrell, Brandland and Roach.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/5/08, 2/7/08 [DP].
Passed Senate: 2/19/08, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Marr and McAuliffe.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) has four social worker classifications. According to the recent study published by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee entitled Children's Administration Social Worker Qualifications, while DSHS uses all four classifications, Social Worker 1 and 2 are seldom used. The reason is because DSHS established the Social Worker 3 classification (SW3C) as the "goal class" for caseworkers. As of July 2003, about 76 percent of Children's Administration caseworkers are SW3Cs.

According to the position description published by the Department of Personnel, Social Worker 1s (SW1Cs) receive training for the first six months of employment and then are assigned cases. As a component of their training program, SW1Cs are to assist professional level staff with cases that will enable them to experience a full range of division specific service functions. Social Worker 2s (SW2Cs) can provide risk assessment intake, perform routine licensing functions and other indirect services to clients such as service eligibility determinations for out-of-home placements and case plan monitoring.

Summary of Bill: When hiring social workers, CA must ensure that 15 percent of those hired at any given time are SW1Cs and SW2Cs. CA is to establish a training process for SW1Cs and SW2Cs to become SW3Cs.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The training must include assigning tasks and duties that are required preparation for the duties of SW3Cs; include data processing responsibilities; and require attendance at meetings on behalf of case carrying social workers. The training process is to be designed to remediate the current workload of SW3Cs. CA may assign SW1Cs and SW2Cs other tasks within their classification that relieve case carrying social workers of their workload.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 2, 2008.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony: OTHER: The problem with the 15 percent hiring requirement is that anytime the department hires SW1Cs and SW2Cs, it can't hire as many SW3Cs. Since SW1Cs and SW2Cs cannot carry as many cases as SW3Cs, more workload is being imposed upon SW3Cs under this scheme.

There are concerns about the prescriptive nature of the bill. It would probably be more helpful to hire additional home support specialists and clerical staff to truly assist in removing some workload from the SW3Cs.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Cheryl Stephani, DSHS; Dennis Eagle, Washington State Federation of State Employees.