

HOUSE BILL REPORT

EHB 1274

As Passed House:

March 4, 2023

Title: An act relating to creating a child malnutrition field guide for the department of children, youth, and families.

Brief Description: Creating a child malnutrition field guide for the department of children, youth, and families.

Sponsors: Representatives Couture, Lekanoff, Eslick, Waters, Walsh, Griffey, Low, Hutchins, Dent, Taylor, Barnard, Connors, Rude, Sandlin, Slatter, Stonier, Harris, Reeves, Abbarno, Robertson, Senn, Davis, Gregerson, Christian, Schmidt, Orwall, Ramel and Pollet.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 1/24/23, 2/15/23 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/4/23, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Requires the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), in consultation with the Department of Health, to produce and make available to the DCYF staff a child malnutrition field guide.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 11 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Eslick, Ranking Minority Member; Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Ortiz-Self, Rule and Walsh.

Staff: Omeara Harrington (786-7136).

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

Background:

Child protective and child welfare services are provided to families to protect children from child abuse and neglect. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) is the agency responsible for administering these services.

If an individual suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, that abuse or neglect can be reported to the DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. If the CPS determines that the report is credible and meets screening criteria, it will assign either a 24-hour investigation response or 72-hour family assessment response, depending on the severity of the allegation.

Anyone, including the DCYF, may file a petition in court alleging that a child should be a dependent of the state due to abuse, neglect, or because there is no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child. If a court determines that a child is dependent, the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations regarding the child's placement, provision of services by the DCYF, compliance of the parents, and whether progress has been made by the parents.

Summary of Engrossed Bill:

By September 1, 2023, the DCYF, in consultation with the Department of Health, must produce and make available to the DCYF staff a child malnutrition field guide. This field guide must:

- be concise, but provide references to additional comprehensive and trauma-informed resources for the DCYF staff to access if needed;
- be easily accessible by the DCYF staff;
- describe how to identify signs of child malnutrition;
- include appropriate questions to ask the child and others close to the child when child malnutrition is suspected;
- include the appropriate next steps the DCYF staff may take when child malnutrition is suspected; and
- include any additional information the DCYF deems relevant.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) The reasons that this bill is needed are tragic ones. A young man with

developmental disabilities died of starvation six days after the CPS visited him and his malnourished siblings. Their guardians used food as a disciplinary method, and the person who died was 15 years old and weighed only 60 to 70 pounds. The investigation began long before with several complaints. This may seem like a small step, but it is an important step that must be taken to help the CPS identify and report accurately when they come across a child who is malnourished.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Travis Couture, prime sponsor.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.