

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HB 1685

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning

**Title:** An act relating to resource and assessment centers.

**Brief Description:** Concerning resource and assessment centers.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Rule, Dent, Eslick and Pollet.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

Human Services, Youth, & Early Learning: 2/14/23, 2/15/23 [DPS].

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Allows Resource and Assessment Centers (RACs) to provide emergency initial care for children as they enter care, and address placement disruptions for children birth through age 17 for up to 72 hours, or up to seven days with Department of Children, Youth, and Families approval.
- Removes the requirement that the RACs demonstrate they are not dependent on reimbursement from the state to operate.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, YOUTH, & EARLY LEARNING

**Majority Report:** The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Senn, Chair; Cortes, Vice Chair; Taylor, Vice Chair; Eslick, Ranking Minority Member; Callan, Dent, Goodman, Ortiz-Self and Rule.

**Minority Report:** Without recommendation. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Couture, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Walsh.

**Staff:** Luke Wickham (786-7146).

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*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:**

### *Resource and Assessment Centers.*

A Resource and Assessment Center (RAC) provides short-term emergency and crisis care for a period up to 72 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays to children who have been removed from their parent's or guardian's care by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) Child Protective Services and/or law enforcement. An RAC may provide care for children birth through age 12, or for children ages 13 through 17 who have a sibling or siblings under age 13 who are being admitted to the RAC. An RAC may operate up to 24 hours a day, and up to seven days per week. An RAC may not be used to address placement disruptions for children who have been removed from a foster home because of behavior or safety concerns.

The DCYF may provide a license to an RAC if:

- there is a demonstrated need in the community;
- the RAC will be primarily staffed by trained volunteers; and
- the RAC is not financially dependent on reimbursement from the state to operate.

The licensing rules for an RAC allow:

- a sufficient number of trained volunteers to meet the staffing requirements;
- flexibility in hours of operation that allow the RAC to close if there are no children in its care; and
- the ability to operate in a residential area.

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## **Summary of Substitute Bill:**

The RACs are no longer required to demonstrate that they are not dependent on reimbursement from the state to operate.

The RACs may:

- provide care for children birth through age 17 at the discretion of the RAC (instead of birth through age 12, and children ages 13 through 17 who have a sibling at the RAC);
- provide care for children for up to 72 hours, or up to seven days with the approval of the DCYF (instead of up to 72 hours, excluding weekends and holidays); and
- be used to provide emergency initial care for children as they enter care and respite care, and address placement disruptions for children who have not been removed from a foster home because of behavior or safety concerns.

## **Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:**

The substitute bill allows the RACs to provide care for children for up to 72 hours, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays or up to seven days with approval of the DCYF

(current law allows care for up to 72 hours with no ability to extend).

The substitute bill removes the ability for the RACs to provide respite care.

The substitute bill provides that RACs may address placement disruptions for children who have not been removed from a foster home because of behavior or safety concerns.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) Sometimes children simply cannot stay in their homes with their families for a time, and when that does happen, it is critical to get the next steps right. The RACs provide some time in a warm and comfortable home-like environment that gives people time to await the right placement.

It is best for children not to move when possible, and it is important to keep attachments strong, but sometimes placement disruptions do occur. The RACs can be a nice tool in addition to other tools to keep those kids moving in the right direction toward the right placement at the right level for their needs with family.

The only two RACs in Washington are in Ellensburg and Bellingham and operated by Skookum Kids. The RACs really focus on those first few days that a child enters care. Sometimes, the DCYF calls to ask if these RACs could provide additional care beyond what is allowed in licensure rules and this bill seeks to address those issues to allow the RACs to provide care on a more flexible basis.

(Opposed) None.

(Other) Flexibility in some areas make sense for the RACs, but the underlying bill makes too many changes that created some openings in which there can be concerns with practice implications by serving a complex, highly acute vulnerable population with a volunteer model for a longer period of time.

The DCYF worked with the sponsors to come to an agreement that addresses those issues and allows appropriate flexibility for the RACs.

**Persons Testifying:** (In support) Representative Alicia Rule, prime sponsor; and Ray Deck

III, Skookum Kids.

(Other) Allison Krutsinger, Department of Children, Youth, and Families.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.