

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## EHB 1274

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Human Services, March 21, 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:** Passed House: 3/4/23, 96-0.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services: 3/16/23, 3/21/23 [DP].

### Brief Summary of Bill

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

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Wilson, C., Chair; Kauffman, Vice Chair; Boehnke, Ranking Member; Frame, Nguyen, Warnick and Wilson, J..

**Staff:** Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

**Background:** The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) was created in 2017. In 2018, DCYF assumed responsibility over child welfare and early learning functions previously held by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the

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Department of Early Learning. On July 1, 2019, DCYF assumed responsibility over juvenile justice programs previously administered by DSHS.

DCYF administers child protective and child welfare services provided to families to protect children from child abuse and neglect.

If an individual suspects that a child has been abused or neglected, that abuse or neglect can be reported to DCYF Child Protective Services (CPS) office or to law enforcement. If 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.

Abuse or neglect means sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or injury of a child by any person under circumstances which cause harm to the child's health, welfare, or safety, excluding conduct permitted by law; or the negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child by a person responsible for or providing care to the child. An abused child is a child who has been subjected to child abuse or neglect.

Anyone, including DCYF, may file a petition in court alleging 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 a child is dependent, the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations regarding the child's placement, provision of services by DCYF, compliance of the parents, and whether progress has been made by the parents.

**Summary of Bill:** By September 1, 2023, DCYF, in consultation with the Department of Health, is to produce and make available to DCYF staff a child malnutrition guide.

The child malnutrition guide must:

- be concise but provide references to additional comprehensive and trauma-informed resources for department staff to access if needed;
- be easily accessible by department 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 appropriate next steps department staff may take when child malnutrition is suspected; and
- include any additional information DCYF deems relevant.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: This bill creates a child malnutrition field guide for CPS and field workers of DCYF. Kids die of malnutrition and workers are understaffed and overwhelmed. A young man died in 2020 of child malnutrition. Food was used as a weapon and there were red flags but they were overlooked. The Office of Family and Children Ombuds, who conducts child fatality reviews, recommended a child malnutrition guide would be helpful. In this instance, CPS workers didn't know what child malnutrition looked like. The hope is to help save lives of kids in the future.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Travis Couture, Prime Sponsor.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.