
Early Learning & Human Services Committee

HB 1660

Brief Description: Reporting information related to racial disproportionality in child welfare.

Sponsors: Representatives Ortiz-Self, Taylor, Reed, Doglio, Ramel, Scott, Parshley and Simmons.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires that the Department of Children, Youth, and Families submit a biennial report beginning September 1, 2026, to the Governor and the Legislature that provides data regarding racial disproportionality in child welfare and recommendations to address that disproportionality.

Hearing Date: 2/12/25

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Child Protective Services.

When the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) receives a report of child abuse or neglect that meets the minimum requirements, the report will be assigned to either be investigated by Child Protective Services (CPS) or receive a Family Assessment Response (FAR). Reports that include a potential crime against a child are sent to law enforcement.

The FAR response is an alternate response for low to moderate risk allegations that supports families without making a finding of child abuse or neglect.

Child Protective Services cases can remain open for families to receive voluntary services where

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families work with a caseworker to develop a case plan and participate in evidence-based in-home or community-based services to build on family strengths and increase protective factors. Voluntary services can be available to families on request and will be recommended by CPS for families experiencing high-risk circumstances.

Child Welfare (Dependency) Court Proceedings.

Anyone, including the DCYF, may file a petition in court alleging that a child should be a dependent of the state due to abandonment, abuse, or neglect, or because there is no parent, guardian, or custodian capable of adequately caring for the child. These petitions must be verified and contain a statement of facts that constitute a dependency and the names and residence of the parents, if known.

When a child is taken into custody, the court is to hold a shelter care hearing within 72 hours. The primary purpose of the shelter care hearing is to determine whether the child can be immediately and safely returned home while the dependency case is being resolved.

If a court finds the need to maintain a child out of the home, the shelter care status remains until a dependency fact-finding hearing is held or the parties enter an agreed order of dependency. The fact-finding hearing must be held within 75 days after the filing of the petition, unless exceptional reasons for a continuance are found.

If a court determines that a child is dependent, the court will hold a dispositional hearing to determine whether the child may remain in the home or be removed from the home and be cared for by a relative, other suitable person, or the DCYF. The child may only be placed out of the parent's care if the court finds that reasonable efforts have been made to prevent or eliminate the need for removal, that prevention services have been offered or provided, and that:

- there is no parent or guardian available to care for the child;
- the parent, guardian, or legal custodian is not willing to take custody of the child; or
- the court finds by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence that a manifest danger exists and the child will suffer serious abuse or neglect if the child is not removed from the home.

Following a fact-finding and dispositional hearing, the court will conduct periodic reviews and make determinations regarding the child's placement, the provision of services by the DCYF, compliance of the parents, and whether progress has been made by the parents.

Under certain circumstances, after a child has been removed from the custody of a parent for at least six months pursuant to a finding of dependency, a petition may be filed seeking termination of parental rights. The court must order the DCYF to file a petition seeking termination of parental rights if the child has been in out-of-home care for 15 of the last 22 months since the date the dependency petition was filed unless the court makes a good cause exception as to why the filing of a termination of parental rights petition is not appropriate.

Summary of Bill:

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) must submit a biennial report beginning September 1, 2026, to the Governor and the Legislature that provides data regarding racial disproportionality in child welfare and recommendations to address that disproportionality.

The report must include the following information from at least the last five years of available information, disaggregated by race:

- child abuse referrals;
- child neglect referrals;
- child neglect referrals that screen in for investigation;
- child abuse referrals that screen in for investigation;
- families receiving a family assessment response;
- families that receive a referral for prevention services from the DCYF;
- families who receive prevention services;
- children who are dependent or who receive a court appointed guardian;
- the length of time that children spend as dependent, in foster care, with relatives, in group care, with a parent or guardian while dependent, or in other placements; and
- employees of DCYF separated by job classification highlighting leadership and supervisory positions separately.

The report must also include:

- efforts taken by DCYF to address racial disproportionality in child welfare;
- outcome measures used by DCYF to gauge improvement in addressing racial disproportionality in child welfare;
- recommendations regarding policy, practice, or funding changes that could reduce racial disproportionality in child welfare;
- updates on the child welfare redesign; and
- updates from the assessment oversight group within DCYF regarding monitoring the use of assessments, approving the selection of new tools, and coordinating assessment tools that are related to racial disproportionality in child welfare.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 3, 2025.

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