

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6766

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 07, 2008

Title: An act relating to the accreditation of the department of social and health services children's administration offices.

Brief Description: Requiring the children's administration in the department of social and health services to become accredited.

Sponsors: Senators Brandland and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/05/08, 2/07/08 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6766 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: In 2001 the Legislature passed legislation requiring the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration (CA) to undertake the process of accreditation with the goal of completion by July 2006. DSHS chose the Council on Accreditation (COA) to accredit the offices.

The accreditation process performed by COA is comprised of the following seven steps:

- The agency seeking accreditation conducts a self study, using guidelines supplied by the COA.
- A team of COA peer reviewers conducts an on-site review lasting at least two days, resulting in a report of compliance with the standards.
- The agency prepares a response to the report.
- A specialized COA committee considers the agency's response and makes a recommendation to the COA's trustees.
- The trustees act upon the recommendation by approving or denying accreditation or deferring a decision pending remedial action.
- Upon approval, the COA publishes the agency's name and notifies relevant individuals and organizations in the community of the approval.

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 agency conducts a yearly review, based on the same standards used in the original review, and transmits the review material to the COA.

The entire review process must be repeated every four years.

Currently, 40 Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) offices have been accredited and the remaining six including CA headquarters, have gone through the site visits and are responding to concerns and questions from the COA. The CA as a whole is not considered accredited until every office has been accredited. The current goal for becoming accredited is Spring 2008.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): All CA field offices and the headquarters' offices are required to be accredited by a nationally recognized child welfare accrediting entity no later than December 31, 2008.

In the event an unexpected fatality or near fatality of a child receiving services from a DCFS office occurs, CA must notify the accrediting entity of this fact and conduct a review. Within six months of the fatality or near fatality, the accrediting entity must review the DCFS office to determine whether it continues to meet accreditation standards. After DSHS conducts the review, it must forward that review, along with any corrective action plan, to the accrediting agency within 6 months of the incident. The agency will review the report and determine whether a site visit is indicated. If the agency does make a site visit, the agency will assess the implementation of the corrective action plan and the need for any action regarding the state's accreditation status.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): DSHS must forward the fatality or near fatality review to the accrediting agency which will decide whether a site visit is indicated. If a site visit occurs, the accrediting agency will assess the implementation of the corrective action plan and the need for any action regarding the state's accreditation status.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 23, 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 on Original Bill: OTHER: Accreditation is the best way to assure that certain child welfare standards are being met. It is somewhat troubling to carve out specific incidents for which additional reports to the Council on Accreditation must be made. Accreditation is a long and involved process; although individual offices may pass accreditation standards the state is not considered accredited until all offices and headquarters are accredited. Children's Administration is close to achieving this, but is not quite there yet. The review contemplated by the bill would have to be worked out with COA because it is not something they currently do.

The intentions behind the bill are noble, but line staff is less than enthusiastic about accreditation. They believe the benefits are nebulous, and the workload to become accredited is very heavy. Line staff believe that the accreditation process has caused an increase in the

number of non-case-carrying program managers to the detriment of the case-carrying line staff. There is a cost to accreditation, and it is not reflected in the fiscal note.

Persons Testifying: OTHER: Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; Cheryl Stephani, DSHS; Dennis Eagle, Washington Federation of State Employees.