

HOUSE BILL REPORT

E2SSB 5025

*As Reported By House Committee on:
Human Services*

Title: An act relating to youth and family services.

Brief Description: Providing services for at-risk youth and their families.

Sponsor(s): Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Craswell, Owen, Bailey, L. Smith, Roach, Stratton and Oke).

Brief History:

Reported by House Committee on:
Human Services, April 3, 1991, DPA.

**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
HUMAN SERVICES**

Majority Report: *Do pass as amended.* Signed by 10 members: Representatives Leonard, Chair; Riley, Vice Chair; Winsley, Ranking Minority Member; Tate; Anderson; Beck; Brekke; Hargrove; Hochstatter; and H. Myers.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

Background: Family Reconciliation Services provide services to runaways and children in conflict with their families. These services are provided at the request of the family or in conjunction with an alternative residential placement (ARP) petition.

The Department of Social and Health Services, a parent or the child, may file an ARP petition. If the child agrees to be placed outside of his or her home and a placement is available, the child is placed.

Crisis Residential Centers (CRCs) were also created under the Families in Conflict chapter. CRCs were intended to be short term placements for no longer than 72 hours, during which, the CRC staff works with the family to avoid furthered or continued out-of-home placement. The Department of Social and Health Services is using CRCs inappropriately for children in need of long-term structured group care.

In 1990, the Families in Conflict chapter was renamed the Family Reconciliation Act. Provision of petitioning the courts on behalf of at-risk youth was added.

Many persons who work with at-risk youth and their families have identified the lack of services requested by the youth or family as a roadblock to successfully reuniting the family. Others question the viability of some of the publicly funded services, feel needed service alternatives are not available, and believe an evaluation of current programs is warranted.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is directed to evaluate and make recommendations on the family reconciliation services program. The Behavioral Sciences Institute homebuilders intensive in-home counseling program is expanded. Statutory staffing ratios for CRCs is removed. A CRC may only house runaways and children from families in conflict.

The Office of the Administrator of the Courts is requested to develop a curriculum on at-risk youth for superior court judges and court personnel. DSHS is directed to produce a videotape on at-risk youth for a variety of public agencies and the public.

Within available funds, substance abuse evaluations shall be made available to minors upon a parent's request. The same provisions are made for evaluations for mental illness.

Definitions for a "minor" and a "person" are incorporated into current law, dealing with treatment for alcoholism, intoxication and drug addiction. Involuntary commitment of minors for drug addiction in addition to alcoholism is provided for. Relationship of treatment needs, based upon evaluation, is clarified to assure minors are treated appropriately. Reference to children in CRCs being removed for seriously assaultive or seriously destructive behavior, is stricken and replaced with language referring to a condition in which a child has taken unauthorized leave and the CRC cannot assure the child will not leave again.

The proposed study, as well as the expansion of family reconciliation services, homebuilders, therapeutic family homes and the continuing education seminar for court officials, are contingent on funding being provided in the biennial operating budget.

Each section of the act must comply with federal requirements for federal funding. A conflicting part shall be inoperable with respect to the agency affected. Rules

drawn to this act shall also comply with federal funding requirements.

Amended Bill Compared to Engrossed Second Substitute Bill:

The Department of Social and Health Services is required, if funds are appropriated, to implement a therapeutic family home program for up to 15 dependent youth. Statutory staffing ratios in CRCs are removed. Children in CRCs may be held in detention if they run away from the CRC. A CRC may only be used to house runaway youth and children from families in conflict. The conversion of 25 voluntary treatment beds for youths with substance abuse problems to involuntary beds is removed. The Continuum of Services pilot project is removed. The involuntary detention process for children addicted to drugs is clarified to ensure that services will be provided within available funds and current programs and facilities.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Amended Bill: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed. However, the bill is null and void unless funded in the budget.

Testimony For: Services to runaways and families in conflict need to be increased and strengthened. The Department of Social and Health Services should follow the law and not use CRCs for the short term housing of runaways and children from families in conflict.

Testimony Against: The Department of Social and Health Services cannot support this legislation because the governor did not include funding for it in his recommended budget for the 1991-93 biennium. The involuntary commitment process should be available for all children who need it, not just children whose parents can afford to pay for it. Voluntary treatment beds for children with alcohol and drug problems should not be converted to beds holding involuntarily committed children with serious alcohol and drug problems.

Witnesses: Robert Hunner, Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (pro); Curt Tabaka, parent (pro); Pete Youngers and Jay West, New Beginnings (con); Ken Stark and Colleen Waterhouse, Department of Social and Health Services (con); Richard DeVany, Juvenile Court Administrators (pro); Peg Marckworth, Homebuilders (pro); Linda Grant, Association of Alcoholism Addictions Programs (pro, except con on section 13); Brandon Rogel, Ryther Child Center (pro); Sheila Smith, Ruth Dykeman Children's Center (pro); Mike Redman, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, (pro); and Robin Downey, parent (pro).