

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5061

AS OF JANUARY 23, 1991

Brief Description: Requiring monitoring of out-of-home placement of children.

SPONSORS: Senators L. Smith, Stratton, Craswell and Johnson.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Staff: Jan Sharar (786-7472)

Hearing Dates: January 24, 1991

BACKGROUND:

Concern in Washington State as well as in other states has developed over lack of contact by caseworkers with children in their care in out-of-home placements. This concern has surfaced in Missouri, Maryland and California through litigation and subsequent court decrees issued on behalf of children in foster care.

The Legislature has become aware of cases in Washington State where face-to-face contact between the child and the caseworker over months and occasionally years has rarely, if ever, taken place.

Regular monitoring of individuals in care is included in child welfare standards manuals and has historically been considered a key activity in professional casework.

SUMMARY:

As a part of statutory monitoring requirements, a child in an out-of-home placement, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and its contract provided caseworkers shall have a face-to-face visit with the child in out-of-home care within 24 hours of the initial placement or any subsequent placement. Visits shall occur at least once a month throughout the placement. If after the dispositional hearing the child has remained in the same placement for at least six months, visits shall occur at least once every 60 consecutive days. Reports to the court concerning the child shall include verification of the visits.

This requirement also applies to the mandated treatment plan to be developed for all children in public and private out-of-home care placement.

An internal reference change is made to reflect the "Community Protection Act" definition reference to "sexually violent

predator" pertaining to finding by the court for aggravated circumstances.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: requested January 16, 1991