

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 6111

AS PASSED SENATE, FEBRUARY 10, 1992

Brief Description: Providing family preservation services.

SPONSORS: Senate Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Senators Craswell, Wojahn, Rasmussen, Roach, Stratton, Owen and Oke)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6111 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Roach, Chairman; L. Smith, Vice Chairman; Craswell, and Stratton.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Hearing Dates: January 20, 1992; January 30, 1992; February 3, 1992

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

BACKGROUND:

Family preservation services are brief, comprehensive, and highly intensive services which are designed to: 1) avoid foster care placements for children; 2) return children to home from foster care; 3) improve overall family functioning; and 4) promote the children's health, safety, and welfare. The services are provided by specially trained caseworkers who offer services 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

In 1974, the first family preservation services, known as Homebuilders, were delivered in Pierce County through a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The state began funding for family preservation services in King County in 1979. The Legislature has now funded programs in 11 counties (Pierce, King, Spokane, Snohomish, Kitsap, Whitman, Yakima, Thurston, Skagit, Jefferson, and Clark). Due to the success at preventing out-of-home placements, at least 31 states have initiated pilot family preservation programs.

It has been suggested that the Department of Social and Health Services should develop a plan for the statewide implementation of family preservation services.

SUMMARY:

A statutory program of family preservation services is established. The Department of Social and Health Services is granted the authority to plan and implement a phased-in program on a statewide basis.

The characteristics of the services are specified and include: 1) training requirements; 2) caseload limitations; 3) authority for expending funds; 4) referrals are made on a 24-hour intake basis; 5) availability of services within 24 hours of referral; 6) service availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week; 7) services are provided within the home; 8) each family is attended to by one caseworker; 9) duration of services; and 10) service strategies. Eligibility requirements for family preservation services are also specified.

The department may provide family reconciliation services. The department's provision of services shall not be used to supplant existing contracts.

The department shall, in consultation with recognized experts, develop and conduct a family preservation services study in at least one region within the state. The study shall include service needs, budget implications, and long-range planning. A report on the study findings is due to the Legislature by January 1, 1993.

The act's implementation provisions are subject to the availability of funds. The department may solicit and use any available federal or private resources available for family preservation services, including funds, in-kind resources, or volunteer services. The department may also use any available state in-kind resources or volunteer services.

Appropriation: none

Revenue: none

Fiscal Note: none requested

TESTIMONY FOR:

Family preservation services have proven to be very effective at reducing out-of-home placement of children. The state of Washington has been on the leading edge in the area of family preservation services and should continue to advance by setting up the statutory framework for the eventual implementation of a phased-in statewide program.

TESTIMONY AGAINST: None

TESTIFIED: Charlotte Booth, Behavioral Science Institute (pro); Susan Robison, Center for the Study of Social Policy, Washington, D.C. (pro); Betsy Cole, Child Welfare League (pro); Vanessa Hodges, UW (pro); LaVonne Conquest (pro)

HOUSE AMENDMENT(S):

The Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services may transfer funds from foster care to family preservation services after July 1, 1993. The secretary shall notify the Legislature of any transfers of funds and shall provide other related information.

The Juvenile Issues Task Force (JITF) shall review the advisability of transferring funds from foster care to family preservation services. The JITF shall also identify ways to improve the foster care system and to expand family presentation services.