

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6111

**AS REPORTED BY COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES,
FEBRUARY 3, 1992**

Brief Description: Providing family preservation services.

SPONSORS: 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

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) availability of services within 24 hours of referral; 5) service availability 24 hours a day, seven days a week; 6) duration of services; and 7) service strategies. Eligibility requirements for family preservation services are also specified.

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.

EFFECT OF PROPOSED SUBSTITUTE:

Clarifications are made to the intent language. Definitions are provided for the terms "family preservation services" and "imminent."

Modifications are made to ensure that the family preservation services are provided within the home, each family is attended to by one caseworker, and the department shall make referrals on a 24-hour intake basis. The department's provision of services shall not be used to supplant existing contracts.

A severability clause is added.

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)