

**SENATE BILL REPORT**

**SB 6238**

**AS OF JANUARY 31, 1992**

**Brief Description:** Encouraging community planning for children, youth, and family services.

**SPONSORS:** Senators Talmadge, Niemi, Stratton and Skratek

**SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES**

**Staff:** Steve Boruchowitz (786-7526)

**Hearing Dates:** February 5, 1992

**BACKGROUND:**

Currently, state programs targeted to children, youth and families are administered by several agencies, including the Department of Social and Health Services, the Department of Health, the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the Department of Community Development. In addition, some federal programs for children, youth and families are administered by state agencies.

Some groups and individuals, representing recipients of these programs and other interested parties, have indicated that a lack of coordination in planning and program administration exists. This may be resulting in an increasing number of children, youth and families not receiving full benefit from state and federal programs.

The Juvenile Justice Task Force is recommending a decentralization of programs for children. The executive branch's Family Policy Initiative is also recommending the coordination and decentralization for such programs, consistent with national policy. It has been suggested that a central state authority for program planning and administration is less responsive to local community needs than would a local or regional entity.

**SUMMARY:**

Current law is modified so that state programs and policies empower communities to support the needs of families and children. Intent statements are added: (1) recognizing the changing nature of families and the need to tailor programs to their specific circumstances; and (2) citing the need to be sensitive to family and community values and expectations.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), the Department of Health, the Department of Community Development (DCD), and the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) shall execute an interagency agreement to establish regional

interagency councils for children, youth and families. The agreement shall give councils authority to administer funds as enumerated in the act. The Secretary of DSHS is to assist in establishing a locally controlled system of councils to ensure coordination of local program efforts regarding children, youth and families. The system shall include not less than six regional councils.

Each council shall have, at a minimum, the largest school district, county juvenile authority, health department, early childhood education and assistance program, and children services office within its region.

No later than June 30, 1995, each department must contract with the councils, through a single block grant, to provide for regional administration of program funds. DSHS must include at least early intervention programs, consolidated juvenile services, all residential and foster care services, and others as designated by legislation. SPI must include at least drug and alcohol prevention programs, Fair Start, school psychological and social counseling, and school health and nutrition programs. DCD must include at least early childhood education programs. The Department of Health must include at least the First Steps Program, and other health education and promotion programs with a primary emphasis on children.

Each council will prepare a two-year children, youth and families plan that responds to the needs and goals of: interagency service plans; local school districts; public health districts; juvenile courts; and Child Protective Services. Each council will plan for access to assistance that will strengthen healthy family units and communities and reduce conditions that undermine them.

Funds for programs covered by these contracts will be transferred without reductions and will receive future cost-of-living adjustments at the same rate appropriated for state employees. No political subdivision or council participant may reduce funding below that provided on the effective date of the act.

The Office of Financial Management will review the administration of funds covered by the block grants and, by January 1, 1996, propose legislation to complete transfers of funds and programs needed to place them in a single state agency whose purpose, mission and goals closely match those of this act. Creation of a new state agency is not to be proposed unless OFM determines no agency currently exists that is suitable. Prior to January 1, 1994, OFM will submit to the Legislature a fund distribution formula that reflects local needs and considers such factors as number of at-risk children, number of AFDC recipients, number of convictions for crimes against children, school dropout rate, among others. A state center for children, youth and families is established. It will serve as a clearinghouse for information on innovations aimed at reducing events that weaken a family's ability to provide for its children. It will also provide technical assistance to regional interagency councils on

issues of community protection and prevention of violence toward children, youth and families. The center will also review and analyze data collected as required in this act, in order to identify issues for further study, including outcomes of interventions and the evaluation of risks and benefits of various incentives aimed at individuals. The list of issues shall be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature. However, no study may be undertaken by the center without prior authority and funding by the Legislature.

**Appropriation:** none

**Revenue:** none

**Fiscal Note:** requested January 27, 1992