

# FINAL BILL REPORT

## HB 3103

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Synopsis as Enacted

**Brief Description:** Requiring newborn screening for exposure to harmful drugs.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Dickerson, Cooke, Tokuda, Keiser, Ogden, Costa and Boldt.

**House Committee on Children & Family Services**

**Senate Committee on Health & Long-Term Care**

**Background:** A 1990 Government Accounting Office (GAO) report to the U.S. Senate Committee on Finance concluded that identifying infants who have been prenatally exposed to drugs is the key to providing them with effective medical and social interventions at birth and as they grow up. The report went on to emphasize the importance of early risk assessment and comprehensive residential drug treatment that includes prenatal care services to increasing the chances that a developing infant will be born healthy."

Many hospitals do not conduct assessments for drug use during pregnancy. Some do not screen infants to determine if they are drug-affected. Hospitals that screen use varying protocols. The GAO report found a wide range of hospital practices.

A uniform procedure for testing or screening does not exist in Washington. Identifying drug-affected babies can be difficult, especially identifying babies suffering from fetal alcohol syndrome. However, the type of screening used by hospitals is significant in determining whether drug-affected babies are identified. Since many drug-affected infants display few overt withdrawal signs and many women deny using drugs out of fear of being incarcerated or losing their child, simple screening protocols may not detect all the infants needing special care.

**Summary:** The Department of Health is directed to consult with medical professionals to develop a screening criteria to use in identifying pregnant or lactating women who are at risk of producing a drug-affected baby. Similarly, the department will develop training methods to instruct personnel to use the identification and screening protocols.

The department must also investigate the feasibility of medical protocols for testing or screening of newborns for drug or alcohol exposure, and consider how to improve the current testing practices.

The department must report its findings to the Legislature by December 1, 1998.

**Votes on Final Passage:**

House 96 0

Senate 45 0

**Effective:** June 11, 1998