

SENATE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1862

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, April 1, 1997

Title: An act relating to community-based alternative response systems.

Brief Description: Requiring a community-based response system for certain families referred to child protective services.

Sponsors: House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Cooke, Dickerson, Boldt and McDonald).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 4/1/97 [DPA].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Long, Chair; Franklin, Hargrove, Kohl, Schow and Stevens.

Staff: Richard Rodger (786-7461)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) uses a risk assessment matrix for screening reports of child abuse and neglect. The risk assessment matrix uses a five point scale for ranking reports. A score of five is the most serious report; a score of one, the least important. The department currently screens out reports with a score of three or lower. Screened-out cases do not typically receive services from the department. In some limited areas, the department does offer services to families that are screened-out.

Summary of Amended Bill: The department provides, by contract, alternative response systems (ARS) within each region of the state. There must be a minimum of nine sites, including the five existing sites. The services are offered, on a volunteer basis, to families who present a low risk of child abuse or neglect. The court may order participation in an alternative response system program when DSHS agrees to the disposition. The systems are evaluated by the Institute for Public Policy by September 1, 2004 and the authority to operate the systems expires on July 1, 2005.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: ARS are expanded to five additional sites. The court may order an individual to receive services from ARS. The systems are evaluated by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy and expire in 2005.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 1997.

Testimony For: We need to provide more assistance to families who are screened– by the department. These low-risk cases often return with more serious allegations of abuse or neglect. The provision of early services will lessen the threat to children.

Testimony Against: The Senate version (striking amendment) of ARS is preferrable. ARS services should be available and provided to families pursuant to a court order.

Testified: Representative Cooke, prime sponsor (pro); Margaret Casey, CCS (pro); Seth Dawson, Common Ground for Children (pro); Laurie Lippold, Children’s Home Society (pro); Jennifer Strus, DSHS (supports concept).