

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6001

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Human Services & Corrections, March 4, 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:** Senators Long, Hargrove, Kohl and Winsley.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 3/4/97 [DPS-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6001 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

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

**Staff:** Richard Rodger (786-7461)

**Background:** Due to the large number of referrals, the Department of Social and Health Services is presently unable to offer or provide social services to families where there is a low risk of abuse or neglect. Many of these families request services which are reserved for families who present higher risks to their children. It is suggested the department create a statewide "alternative response system" to provide community-based services to low-risk families.

The department currently evaluates referrals of alleged abuse or neglect which are made to Child Protective Services. After assessment at in-take the department assigns "risk tags" to the cases. The risk tags are assigned from low-risk, level 1, to high-risk, level 5.

**Summary of Substitute Bill:** The department provides, by contract, alternative response systems within each region of the state. The department ensures there is at least two sites in each of its six administrative regions. The services are offered, on a volunteer basis, to families who present a low risk of child abuse or neglect. The court may order a parent or a family to utilize the services of an alternative response system based upon the department's recommendation and the availability of the services. 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.

**Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:** The department must contract for alternative response systems in at least 12 sites statewide. Based upon recommendation of DSHS, the court may order a person to use the services. Data is collected and an evaluation is conducted. The project is terminated in 2005, unless extended by the Legislature.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Effective Date:** The bill takes effect on January 1, 1998.

**Testimony For:** This bill will expand the current continuum of care projects to allow for use of alternative response systems (ARS) statewide. This will make voluntary services available to persons who are evaluated as presenting a low risk of abuse or neglect to their children. It would be useful to allow the court to order higher risk cases to the ARS when DSHS agrees and the services are available.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Testified:** Jennifer Strus, DSHS, (pro).