

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2899

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 23, 2000

Title: An act relating to workplace safety in state hospitals.

Brief Description: Developing a workplace safety plan for state hospitals.

Sponsors: House Committee on Commerce & Labor (originally sponsored by Representatives Conway, Clements, Cody, Cooper and Keiser; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/22/2000, 2/23/2000 [DP].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Costa, Vice Chair; Franklin, Kohl-Welles, Long, Patterson, Sheahan, Stevens and Zarelli.

Staff: Fara Daun (786-7459)

Background: Employees of the Washington state hospitals face high rates of workplace violence, as evidenced by workers' compensation claims. The violence is often related to the nature of the patients served, who are both mentally ill and too dangerous or gravely disabled to be treated in the community. There is concern that additional training and appropriate safeguards may be necessary to minimize the violence and risk and to provide a reasonably safe and secure environment for both employees and patients.

Summary of Bill: Each state hospital must conduct a security and safety assessment to identify existing or potential hazards in the workplace. Using the assessment, each state hospital must develop a plan by November 1, 2000, to reasonably prevent and protect employees from violence at the hospital. The state hospitals must implement the plan by January 1, 2001. Each state hospital must provide workplace violence prevention training to affected employees by July 1, 2001, and regularly thereafter. The employee must have the workplace violence training in addition to other ongoing training and prior to assignment to a patient unit. Each state hospital must keep records of any violent act against an employee or patient beginning no later than July 1, 2000, and maintain the records for five years. Failure to comply subjects the hospital to citation under state labor laws. The Department of Social and Health Services must provide an interim report July 1, 2000, a copy of the completed plan November 1, 2000, and report annually on its progress to reduce workplace violence in the state hospitals.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: This bill is a beginning step to make state hospitals safer places to work or to be a patient. Nurses need better training to prevent violence to patients. There is support by DSHS, the labor unions, and the Department of Labor and Industries.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Representative Steve Conway, prime sponsor; Pat Terry, Acting Director, Mental Health Division, DSHS; Ellie Menzies, SEIU; Michael Wood, Labor & Industries; Carol Willey, Holistic Health and Advocacy.