

SENATE BILL REPORT

SHB 2912

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

Title: An act relating to use of psychiatric medications by children in state custody.

Brief Description: Requiring the department of social and health services to maintain records on children in state custody who are using psychiatric medications.

Sponsors: House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Boldt and Clements).

Brief History:

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

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

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

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7484)

Background: Concerns have been raised that children in foster care who have emotional and behavioral problems are being excessively medicated. However, little information on the level of psychiatric medication and its relation to psychiatric disorders is available.

Summary of Amended Bill: The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) must report to the Legislature by December 15, 2000, on the following information regarding children in out-of-home care during 1999:

- the number of children receiving medication;
- the number of children who began receiving medication after entering foster care;
- the medical diagnosis of foster children receiving medication;
- the number, types and frequency of medications prescribed;
- the number of children receiving multiple medications; and
- the number of children receiving Ritalin.

Medication is defined as psychotropic medication or other medication prescribed to address psychiatric or other behavioral issues.

Amended Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: The report to be generated by DSHS is not part of the Passport Program. The items to be reported on are clarified and some additional items are added.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: It is important for the Legislature to know how many children in foster care are receiving medication and why in order to establish state policy on the use of such medication.

Testimony Against: DSHS is concerned about the original bill because of the workload associated with pulling together the information.

Testified: PRO: Representative Marc Boldt, prime sponsor; Carol Willey, Holistic Health and Advocacy; Richard Warner, Citizen's Commission on Human Rights; CONCERNS: Jake Romo, DSHS.