

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6141

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Labor & Workforce Development, January 31, 2000
Ways & Means, February 8, 2000

Title: An act relating to reporting of domestic violence against applicants and recipients of temporary assistance for needy families.

Brief Description: Adopting the personal responsibility for state workers domestic violence reporting act.

Sponsors: Senators Fairley, Fraser, Costa, Kline and Kohl-Welles.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Labor & Workforce Development: 1/18/2000, 1/31/2000 [DPS].
Ways & Means: 2/3/2000, 2/8/2000 [DP2S].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON LABOR & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6141 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Fairley, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Kline and Wojahn.

Staff: Joanne Conrad (786-7472)

SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

Majority Report: That Second Substitute Senate Bill No. 6141 be substituted therefor, and the second substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Loveland, Chair; Bauer, Vice Chair; Brown, Vice Chair; Fairley, Fraser, Kline, Kohl-Welles, Long, Rasmussen, Rossi, B. Sheldon, Snyder, Spanel, Winsley, Wojahn and Zarelli.

Staff: Brian Sims (786-7431)

Background: Recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, welfare) are generally required by state law to participate in work activities.– However, in some individual circumstances, a recipient at risk of domestic violence victimization may be placed in increased danger if required by the state to participate in an inappropriate work activity.

In cases involving recipients who are at risk of violence, the state may either exempt them by reason of hardship– (the Family Violence Option–), or may place them in a TANF work activity designed to lead to independence but appropriate for their individual situation.

In order to appropriately place recipients in work activities that do not endanger them, relevant workers at the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Employment Security Department (ESD) must discern and identify those at risk. Failure to do so may subject the recipient to trauma or death. The ability to identify those at risk is a learned skill, requiring specialized training.

Summary of Second Substitute Bill: DSHS screens applicants and recipients of TANF for domestic violence and provides universal notification regarding supportive services, exemptions and deferrals. DSHS monitors compliance with screening and notification and maintains confidentiality. DSHS refers domestic violence victims to trained employees who provide information on existing local services. DSHS reviews confirmed cases of domestic violence to identify ways to intervene at the earliest possible time.

DSHS and ESD are required to provide or contract for the provision of specialized training in the culturally competent identification and assistance of domestic violence victims. Minimum training standards are established.

Second Substitute Bill Compared to Substitute Bill: Screening and notification procedures after initial application are simplified.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Mandated reporting of domestic violence, with criminal penalties for failure to report is removed. Increased screening and referral to services, increased training in identification, and assistance of victims are added. Confidentiality is emphasized and TANF clients are provided with an explanation of the exemptions or deferrals available to victims.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: Training and resources are needed to identify and appropriately assist domestic violence victims.

Testimony Against: Criminal liability is too severe. Mandatory reporting does not necessarily help victims.

Testified: PRO: Liz Dunbar, Department of Social and Health Services; Sharon Case, Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Bev Hermanson, WFSE (concerns).