

HOUSE BILL REPORT

2SHB 1692

As Passed House:

March 12, 1999

Title: An act relating to investigations involving children as witnesses and victims.

Brief Description: Providing special training for those who interview child witnesses and victims.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Children & Family Services (Originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Tokuda, Boldt, Edmonds, Dickerson, Talcott, Kastama, Lovick, Wood, Kenney, Schual-Berke, Eickmeyer, Ogden, Santos, Mitchell, Bush and Stensen).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 2/8/99, 2/25/99 [DPS];

Appropriations: 3/6/99 [DP2S(w/o sub CFS)].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/12/99, 96-0.

Brief Summary of Second Substitute Bill

- Law enforcement and children's caseworkers who interview child sexual abuse victims will receive specialized training.
- A state model protocol and local protocols will be established governing multidisciplinary investigations of child abuse and neglect.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives D. Sommers, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Boldt, Republican Vice Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Campbell; Carrell; Dickerson; Eickmeyer; Kastama and Pflug.

Staff: David Knutson (786-7146).

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: The second substitute bill be substituted therefor and the second substitute bill do pass and do not pass the substitute bill by Committee on Children & Family Services. Signed by 31 members: Representatives Huff, Republican Co-Chair; H. Sommers, Democratic Co-Chair; Alexander, Republican Vice Chair; Doumit, Democratic Vice Chair; D. Schmidt, Republican Vice Chair; Barlean; Benson; Boldt; Carlson; Clements; Cody; Crouse; Gombosky; Grant; Kagi; Keiser; Kenney; Lambert; Linville; Lisk; Mastin; McIntire; McMorris; Mulliken; Parlette; Regala; Rockefeller; Ruderman; Sullivan; Tokuda and Wensman.

Staff: Julie Salvi (786-7349).

Background:

A recent report of the Office of the Family and Children's Ombudsman recommended several improvements related to investigations of alleged abuse and neglect by law enforcement and child protective service workers. The ombudsman recommended improvements in documenting interviews, providing specialized and ongoing training in effective interviewing techniques for child protective services staff and law enforcement, and establishing collaborative protocols between child protective services and other agencies involved in child abuse investigations.

Summary of Bill:

The Criminal Justice Training Commission and the Department of Social and Health Services will provide introductory and specialized training for law enforcement and child protective services staff who interview children. The Washington Institute for Public Policy will convene a group to develop a model written protocol for establishing multidisciplinary investigations. Each local agency involved in investigating child abuse will adopt a local protocol based on the model state standard. Each county will also adopt a written protocol for handling child abuse investigations. The local protocols will be adopted and in place by July 1, 2000.

The Department of Social and Health Services will operate up to three pilot projects involving child abuse and neglect investigations. The department will provide reports to legislative committees in December 1999 and December 2000. The department will provide a near verbatim record of disclosure interviews involving child sexual abuse cases.

Appropriation: An unspecified amount is appropriated from the general fund.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: (Children & Family Services) (Original bill) Law enforcement and caseworkers who interview child victims of sexual assault need specialized training. There needs to be a standardized procedure for preserving interviews with child victims. Law enforcement and caseworkers should follow a model state protocol for conducting multidisciplinary investigations of child abuse and neglect.

(Appropriations) (Substitute bill) Key parts of this bill include: improving interviewing techniques; a coordinated approach between police, prosecutors, and child protective service workers; improving record keeping; and developing protocols. It is important to focus on child sexual abuse cases since these cases have caused the most concern in recent years.

Testimony Against: (Children & Family Services) None.

(Appropriations) None.

Testified: (Children & Family Services) (In support) Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; Suzanne Brown, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Program; Seth Dawson, Common Ground for Children; Sharon Tolton, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission; Roger Heine, Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission; Rosie Oreskovich, Department of Social and Health Services; and Donna Patrick, Developmental Disabilities Council.

(Children & Family Services) (In support with amendments) Tom McBride, Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys.

(Children & Family Services) (Neutral) Vickie Wallen, Office of Family and Children's Ombudsman.

(Children & Family Services) (Undecided) Jerry Sheehan, American Civil Liberties Union of Washington.

(Appropriations) Lonnie Johns Brown, Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs.