

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6055

As Passed House - Amended:

April 4, 2001

Title: An act relating to evaluating children within the foster care agency caseload.

Brief Description: Evaluating children within the foster care agency caseload.

Sponsors: By Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Long, Hargrove and Stevens).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Children & Family Services: 3/19/01, 3/28/01 [DP].

Floor Activity:

Passed House - Amended: 4/4/01, 92-0.

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill
(As Amended by House)**

- Codifies the Foster Care Assessment Program pilot program being conducted by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
- Requires state-wide implementation of the selected assessment instrument by December 31, 2001.
- Requires DSHS to use information obtained in using the assessment instrument in making decisions about the child's out-of-home placement.
- Requires the DSHS to report to the Legislature in 2002, 2004, and 2006 on the impact of the new assessment instrument on department policy.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Boldt, Republican Co-Chair; Tokuda, Democratic Co-Chair; Kagi, Democratic Vice Chair; Morell, Republican Vice Chair; Ballasiotes, Campbell, Darneille, Dickerson, Miloscia and Pflug.

Staff: Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

Background:

In making out-of-home placements and providing the necessary services, it is important that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Children's Administration has sufficient, quality information about a child. Since 1993, the Legislature and the Children's Administration have enhanced the tracking of children's needs and improved the delivery of services by implementing identifiers in the Children's Administration Management Information Systems (CAMIS), the Healthy Kids Campaign, the State Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), the Passport program, the Independent Living Skills Program, the Individual Service and Safety Plan (ISSP), the Foster Care Assessment Program (FCAP), and the Foster Care Task Force.

During the 2000 legislative session, the Legislature passed ESB 6555 requiring the FCAP model to be used earlier in placement and mandating a standardized, validated approach to screening children within the first 30 days of placement. This assessment tool must assist in providing appropriate services to children, identify children who are likely to need long-term care and assistance, assist in matching the child with an appropriate caregiver as soon as possible, and assist in achieving the child's permanency plan in a timely process. The legislation requires each region of the DSHS to make the appropriate number of referrals to the FCAP to the extent funded. As a result of the legislation the Children's Administration is required to report to the Legislature on the assessment process, tools used, aggregate data, and the results achieved every six months beginning December 31, 2000.

As the result of ESB 6555, the Children's Administration is developing a life domain-based matrix model to review multiple areas within the child's life and functioning that provides valuable information regarding placement, services, and permanency needs. Named the Washington State Kidscreen Model, the model measures the child's physical health, developmental progress, educational needs, stressful and traumatic life events, the family/social history, and the emotional/behavioral needs. Kidscreen is a combination of standardized, validated screening tools and utilization of existing resources and information selected by the Children's Administration with the assistance of a clinical consultation team. Four Division of Children & Family Services offices are conducting a Kidscreen pilot program employing different tools.

Summary of Amended Bill:

The FCAP pilot program is codified allowing the Children's Administration to continue to test out the different assessment tools. The pilot program may continue through August 31, 2001. The DSHS must report the pilot program results to the appropriate legislative committees by September 30, 2001.

An assessment instrument must be selected and implemented state-wide within existing

resources by December 31, 2001.

The information gained by using the assessment instrument shall be used by DSHS in making decisions about a child's out-of-home placement.

A report on how the assessment instrument has affected state-wide policies must be submitted to the appropriate legislative committees by December 31, 2002. Additional reports are due December 31, 2004 and December 31, 2006.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Testimony For: The catalyst for this bill was the Foster Care Task Force. The task force recommended an assessment tool be developed and used for children coming into the foster care system. This actually has been in statute since 1993; however, until last year's legislation was enacted, the DSHS had not been in compliance. Since there is no assessment tool that is ready to use, the DSHS needs time to pilot and develop the appropriate tool. They are currently conducting pilot programs and need a little more time to work on the tools. This has been a time-consuming and costly process. The DSHS is on target for a finish date of August 2001.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Senator Long, prime sponsor; Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society; and Marianna Conner, Department of Social and Health Services.