
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

SB 6709

Brief Description: Addressing service and education planning for children in out-of-home care.

Sponsors: Senators Eide, Costa, Rasmussen, Thibaudeau, Prentice, Fraser, Kohl-Welles, McAuliffe, Haugen and Keiser.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to submit a proposal to the Legislature by October 1, 2002 addressing the educational stability of children in foster care fewer than seventy-five days.

Hearing Date:

Staff: Deborah Frazier (786-7152).

Background:

Each year in Washington, over 12,000 school-age children enter state custody and the foster care system because of abuse, neglect, abandonment or family conflict. Approximately half of these children leave state custody within 60 days.

The Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) completed a statutorily required study in November, 2001, entitled "Educational Attainment of Foster Youth". The study included a review of previous research in this area, and a statewide analysis of foster youth in the Washington public schools.

Among the study findings, researchers found that compared to their peers not in foster care:

- foster youth score 15-20 points below non-foster youth in statewide achievement tests;
- 59 percent of foster youth in 11th grade complete high school on time, compared with 86 percent of non-foster youth;
- twice as many foster youth repeat a grade, change schools in a school year, or enroll in special education, compared with non-foster youth; and,

- a youth's length of stay in foster care does not appear to be related to educational attainment.

The study report identifies a number of factors that influence academic achievement for all youth. Of the five most important predictors of on-time high school graduation, the second most important factor was the number of times a child changes school during the school year. The study found that twice as many foster youth changed schools once during the school year, and three times as many foster youth changed schools twice, when compared to non-foster youth.

Summary of Bill:

The DSHS and the OSPI are required to submit a proposal to the Legislature by October 1, 2002 addressing the educational stability of children in foster care fewer than seventy-five days. Representatives of school districts and foster care advocates must be consulted.

The proposal must consider when children might best be served by continuing attendance at the school where they were enrolled prior to the placement out of home, how costs related to transportation may be addressed, arrangements for children being home-schooled or in private school, coordination of judicial scheduling, and any regulatory or statutory changes needed to carry out the proposal.

These provisions expire January 1, 2003.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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