

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1058

C 112 L 03

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Addressing educational attainment for foster children.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Children & Family Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Boldt, McIntire, Nixon, Dickerson, Fromhold, O'Brien, Lantz, Linville, Kenney, Kessler, Clibborn, Talcott, Simpson and Wood).

House Committee on Children & Family Services
Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections

Background:

In 2002 legislation was enacted requiring the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), in cooperation with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to convene a working group to prepare a plan for the Legislature addressing educational stability and continuity for school-age children entering short-term foster care, and assuring that the best interest of the child is a primary consideration in the school placement of a child in short-term foster care.

The DSHS reported to the Legislature on the recommendations developed by the working group in November 2002. The working group's recommendations included the following:

- The Children's Administration (CA) of the DSHS and the OSPI should develop a formal policy statement that maintains foster children in their home school whenever practical;
- Foster parent recruitment priorities should shift to develop more foster homes in school districts with high rates of foster care removal;
- An oversight committee consisting of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies should be established to develop best practice standards to maintain foster children in their home school whenever practical; and
- The CA and the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) should work together to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing by the local CA social worker and the presiding Judge or Commissioner.

Summary:

It is the policy of Washington that, whenever practical and in the best interest of the child, children placed into foster care must remain enrolled in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care.

The administrative regions of the DSHS must develop protocols with school districts specifying strategies for communication, coordination, and collaboration regarding the status and progress of foster children placed in the region, in order to maximize the educational continuity and achievement for foster children. The protocols must include methods to assure effective sharing of information consistent with state law concerning the exchange of student information.

The DSHS must establish an oversight committee, composed of staff from the CA, the OSPI, and advocacy agencies, to develop strategies for maintaining foster children in the schools they were attending at the time they entered foster care.

The DSHS must work with the AOC to develop protocols to ensure that educational stability is addressed during the shelter care hearing.

The DSHS must perform these tasks based on available resources.

Votes on Final Passage:

House 97 0

Senate 45 0 (Senate amended)

House 97 0 (House concurred)

Effective: July 27, 2003