
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

HB 1233

Brief Description: Improving services for kinship caregivers.

Sponsors: Representatives Pettigrew, Boldt, Moeller, Kagi, Lovick, Orcutt, Dickerson, Chase, Darneille, Eickmeyer, O'Brien, Roach, Armstrong, Flannigan, Jarrett, Clibborn, Lantz, Kenney, Benson, Shabro, Nixon, Morrell, Mielke and Haigh.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to: develop a relative search process; establish two kinship care navigator pilot projects; and establish an oversight committee on kinship care.
- Establishes a kinship caregiver authorization affidavit.

Hearing Date: 1/30/03

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

In 2001, the Legislature directed the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to study the prevalence and needs of families who are raising related children. In June 2002, the WSIPP issued a report describing the prevalence and characteristics of kinship care, needs of kinship care providers in the state, policies and services available in Washington and other states, and policy options that may increase appropriate kinship care placements.

In anticipation of the release of the WSIPP report, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) was required to convene a kinship caregivers workgroup to review the report and develop a briefing for the Legislature identifying the policy issues related to kinship caregivers, the federal and state statutes associated with these issues, and options to address the issues.

The Kinship Care Workgroup, which the DSHS formed in response, reported to the Legislature in November 2002 with recommendations identifying a number of steps that

could be taken by the Legislature or by the DSHS that encompassed the following areas related to kinship care: financial needs, service delivery and practice, legal issues, social services, and issues for federal action.

The Kinship Care Workgroup put forth a total of 16 high priority recommendations, including the following:

- The Children's Administration of the DSHS should strengthen elements of the relative search process that would increase the number of children placed with willing and able relatives when out-of-home placement is required.
- The DSHS should train and establish "Kinship Care Navigators" in each DSHS region.
- The state should adopt a Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit, modeled on one that has operated successfully in California since 1994, which would authorize relative caregivers to enroll a child in school and obtain medical care for the child.
- The Legislature should mandate and fund an ongoing committee of relative caregivers and others to oversee the implementation of the recommendations in this report and continue future work on kinship care in the state.

Summary of Bill:

The DSHS must implement strategies to increase the number of children placed with willing and able relatives when out-of-home placement is required. At a minimum, the DSHS must:

- Develop a standardized, statewide protocol to be used for relative search activities; and
- Develop a policy for conducting active outreach efforts to identify and locate relatives during initial and ongoing searches.

By December 1, 2003, the DSHS must establish two kinship care navigator pilot projects, one in an urban region of the state and one in a rural region of the state, to assist kinship caregivers with understanding and navigating the system of services for children in out-of-home care.

A kinship caregiver's authorization affidavit is created that could be used to authorize a kinship caregiver to enroll a minor in school and consent to school-related medical care on behalf of a minor in his or her care, and to authorize a kinship caregiver to consent to medical care and dental care on behalf of a minor in his or her care.

The DSHS must establish an oversight committee to monitor, guide, and report on kinship care recommendations and implementation activities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on January 21, 2003.

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