
**Children & Family Services
Committee**

ESSB 6642

Brief Description: Ordering case conferences following shelter care hearings.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Children & Family Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Schmidt, Carlson, Mulliken, Hewitt, Roach and McAuliffe).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to facilitate a case conference following shelter care.

Hearing Date: 2/19/04

Staff: Cynthia Forland (786-7152).

Background:

Following shelter care and no later than 25 days prior to fact-finding, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), upon the parent's request or counsel for the parent's request, is required to facilitate a conference to develop and specify in a written service agreement the expectations of both the DSHS and the parent regarding the care and placement of the child. In addition, at any other stage in a dependency proceeding, the DSHS, upon the parent's request, is required to facilitate a case conference.

The DSHS is required to invite to the conference the parent, counsel for the parent, the foster parent or other out-of-home care provider, caseworker, guardian ad litem, counselor, or other relevant health care provider, and any other person connected to the development and well-being of the child.

The written notice of custody and rights that Child Protective Services (CPS) is required to provide to the parents, guardian, or legal custodian of a child taken into custody by CPS pursuant to a court order or in accordance with state law without a court order is required to include the following text:

You may request that the DSHS facilitate a case conference to develop a written service agreement following the shelter care hearing. The service agreement may not conflict with the court's order of shelter care. You may request that a multidisciplinary team, family group

conference, prognostic staffing, or case conference be convened for your child's case. You may participate in these processes with your counsel present.

The DSHS is required, within existing resources, to provide to parents requesting a multidisciplinary team, family group conference, prognostic staffing, or case conference information that describes these processes prior to the processes being undertaken.

Summary of Bill:

The conference that the DSHS is required to facilitate following shelter care is specified to be a *case* conference. The requirement to facilitate a case conference is no longer limited to a request for the conference by the parent or counsel for the parent.

The DSHS is required to invite to the case conference all of the identified individuals *who are available*. The DSHS is required to notify the parents that they may have up to two advocates accompany them to the case conference. All available case conference participants must receive written notice at least seven business days prior to the case conference date, notifying them of the date, time, and location of the case conference.

The written notice of custody and rights that CPS is required to provide to the parents, guardian, or legal custodian of a child taken into custody must state that the individual receiving the notice has a right to a case conference.

The requirement that the DSHS provide information to parents describing multidisciplinary teams, family group conferences, prognostic staffings, and case conferences includes not only parents requesting any of these processes but also parents participating in these processes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available for substitute bill.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.