

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6642

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Children & Family Services & Corrections, February 4, 2004

Title: An act relating to family group conferences following shelter care hearings.

Brief Description: Ordering family group conferences following shelter care hearings.

Sponsors: Senators Stevens, Hargrove, Schmidt, Carlson, Mulliken, Hewitt, Roach and McAuliffe.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Children & Family Services & Corrections: 2/3/04, 2/4/04 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON CHILDREN & FAMILY SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6642 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Stevens, Chair; Parlette, Vice Chair; Carlson, Deccio, Hargrove, McAuliffe and Regala.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Current law allows parents in a dependency action to request that the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) facilitate a meeting of the parties. The purpose of the conference is for the department and the parents to discuss their expectations regarding the care and placement of the child. Concerns have been expressed that such conferences rarely occur, either because parents are not aware of them, or because they are not deemed to be helpful.

Summary of Substitute Bill: DSHS must facilitate a case conference in every dependency. Parents are notified that they may have two advocates accompany them to the case conference. All available participants must receive seven days written notice of the case conference.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: "Family group conference" is replaced by "case conference." Parents are notified that they may have two advocates accompany them to the case conference. Available participants must receive written notice seven days in advance of the case conference.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

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

Testimony For: Opportunities for those involved in a child's life to confer are to be encouraged. Use of the terms "family group conference" is confusing.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Ali Pearson, WA Assoc. of Criminal Defense Lawyers (pro); LaVerne Lamoureux, Director, Program and Policy, Children's Administration (pro); Laurie Lippold, Children's Home Society (pro).