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**Early Learning & Children's  
Services Committee**

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**HB 1334**

**Brief Description:** Requiring the petitioner in a child welfare case to provide the court with relevant documentation.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Hinkle and Walsh.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires that when the Department of Social and Health Services (Department) submits a report to the court that contains a recommendation or assertion in a dependency or termination of parental rights case, the Department is required to submit documentation supporting that recommendation or assertion.

**Hearing Date:** 2/9/07

**Staff:** Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

**Background:**

Dependency and Termination of Parental Rights Background

If there are allegations of abandonment, abuse or neglect, or no parent who is capable of caring for a child, the state may investigate the allegations and initiate a dependency proceeding in juvenile court. If the court finds the statutory requirements have been met, the court will find the child to be a dependent of the state.

Whenever the court orders a dependent child to be removed from the home, the court will enter a dispositional plan which will include the obligations of the parties including the parents, the supervising agency or Department of Social and Health Services (Department), and the child. The dispositional order will contain an order for the placement of the child either within the home or outside of the home. If the child is placed outside the home, he or she may be placed with a relative or in non-relative foster care.

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Within 60 days of assuming responsibility for the child, the Department is required to provide the court with a permanency plan for the child. The permanency plan will contain the desired goal for the child which may include a plan to return the child home, adoption, long-term placement, or guardianship, including a dependency guardianship. The court must hold the permanency planning hearing when a child has been in out-of-home care for nine months. The hearing must take place within 12 months of the current placement.

The status of all dependent children must be reviewed by the court every six months. During the review the court will examine the progress of the parents in meeting the requirements of the dispositional plan. At this hearing the court may return the child to the home if the parent has made sufficient progress.

If the parent fails to make progress in curing the parental deficiencies which led to the dependency, or if one of the statutory aggravating factors exist, a termination petition may be filed. Federal law requires that after a child has been in foster care for fifteen of the past twenty-two months, the state must file a petition to terminate parental rights unless the child is being cared for by relatives, there is a compelling reason why termination would not be in the best interest of the child, or the state has failed to offer the necessary services to the parent.

If the court finds the statutory grounds for termination are met, the court will terminate the parental rights and the parent will no longer have rights, privileges, or obligations toward the child.

#### Task Force Background

In 2005, the legislature formed a task force to review issues pertaining to the health, safety and welfare of children receiving services from child protective services and child welfare services. In 2006, the task force reported several recommendations to the legislature for improving child protective services and child welfare services.

#### **Summary of Bill:**

In any dependency or termination of parental rights case, when the Department submits a report to the court that contains a recommendation or assertion, the Department is required to submit documentation supporting that recommendation or assertion.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

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