

FINAL BILL REPORT

SHB 1472

C 465 L 07

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Analyzing and remedying racial disproportionality and racial disparity in child welfare.

Sponsors: By House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Pettigrew, Haler, Kagi, P. Sullivan, Walsh, Lovick, Barlow, Kenney, McCoy, Darneille, Hasegawa, Roberts, Hinkle, Santos, Appleton, Upthegrove, Williams, Moeller, Ormsby, VanDeWege, Schual-Berke and Dickerson).

House Committee on Early Learning & Children's Services

House Committee on Appropriations

Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

Background:

The disproportionate representation of a racial or ethnic group within a system is often referred to as racial disproportionality. The concept of racial disproportionality looks across racial and ethnic groups at the relative ratios of the groups in a system. In the child welfare system, racial disproportionality occurs when a particular racial or ethnic group of children is represented at a higher percentage than would be expected based on their percentage of the population as a whole.

A related concept used to discuss disproportionate representation in the child welfare system is over-representation. This concept looks at the difference between how a particular group of children is represented in a system compared with how that same group is represented in the general population.

Racial disparity is a term used to define disparate services provided (type, quantity, or quality) or treatment extended to one or more racial or ethnic groups. Within the child welfare system, racial disparity occurs when one or more racial or ethnic groups receive unequal treatment as compared with other groups. The term racial disparity also is used to describe disparate outcomes related to health, mental health, educational achievement and graduation rates, permanency, homelessness, or criminal involvement for different racial or ethnic groups.

Research at the national level indicates that children of color are represented in foster care at a rate higher than these children are represented in the general population. Within Washington, the most recent look at racial disproportionality in child welfare is the research conducted in King County beginning in 2004. The data from this research indicates that disproportionate numbers of children of color in King County are represented in the state's child welfare

system. Native American and African American children are over-represented at nearly every decision point in the system. The King County Coalition on Racial Disproportionality is using this data to implement interventions to address disproportionality at targeted decision points in the system.

In 2006 the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) participated in a conference coordinated by the National Conference of State Legislatures to address the causes and extent of racial disproportionality in child welfare. Also examined were states' efforts to identify promising practices to reduce racial disproportionality and disparate outcomes for children of color in child welfare. The DSHS is engaged in a variety of efforts with Washington's Tribal leaders to address the over-representation of Native American children in the state's child welfare system.

Summary:

The Secretary of the DSHS is directed to convene an advisory committee to address racial disproportionality and disparity in Washington's child welfare system. The advisory group will be limited to 15 members and composed of:

- (1) experts in social work, law, child welfare, psychology, and related fields;
- (2) two or more tribal representatives;
- (3) one representative of a community-based organization involved with child welfare;
- (4) one representative from the DSHS;
- (5) one current or former foster youth;
- (6) one current or former foster parent;
- (7) one parent previously involved with Washington's child welfare or juvenile justice system; and
- (8) a representative from the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee.

The Senate Majority Leader, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Secretary of the DSHS each will appoint five members of the advisory committee. Appointments to the committee must be coordinated to achieve the specified representation. Once appointed, the committee will select two members to serve as co-chairs, one of whom must be from a non-governmental entity.

The Washington Institute for Public Policy will provide technical assistance to the committee. The DSHS must make reasonable efforts to seek public and private funding for the advisory committee.

The advisory committee must examine and analyze:

- (1) the level of involvement for children of color in the state's child welfare system;
- (2) the number of children of color in low-income or single-parent families involved in child welfare;
- (3) the structures of families involved in child welfare; and
- (4) the outcomes for children in the existing system.

By June 1, 2008, the advisory committee must report the results of its analysis to the DSHS. If the data indicates disproportionality or disparity for one or more racial or ethnic groups within

one or more regions in the state, the DSHS must develop a plan to remedy the disproportionality or disparity. The advisory committee will provide ongoing evaluation of current and prospective efforts to reduce and eliminate racial disproportionality and disparity.

By December 1, 2008, the DSHS must report to the Legislature regarding the analysis undertaken by the advisory committee and the plan to remedy the disproportionality or disparity. Beginning January 2010, and through January 1, 2014, the DSHS must provide the Legislature with an annual progress report on efforts to reduce and eliminate racial disproportionality and disparity in the state's child welfare system. The act expires June 30, 2014.

Votes on Final Passage:

House	95	2	
Senate	47	0	(Senate amended)
House	94	1	(House concurred)

Effective: July 22, 2007