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

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**SSB 6367**

**Brief Description:** Changing provisions relating to child protective services investigations.

**Sponsors:** Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Eide, Stevens, Keiser, Hargrove, Franklin, Carrell, Regala, Shin, Kohl-Welles and Rasmussen).

**Brief Summary of Substitute Bill**

- Requires a search of the statewide sex offender registry when investigating and responding to allegations of child sexual abuse.

**Hearing Date:** 2/22/08

**Staff:** Sydney Forrester (786-7120).

**Background:**

When the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) receives a report of child abuse or neglect, agency policy requires the Child Protective Services (CPS) intake worker to accept the report for investigation if the information meets the sufficiency screen requirements. The intake worker must evaluate risk factor information regarding child characteristics, history of prior agency contacts, parental functioning, environmental factors, and alleged perpetrator access to the child. Based upon this information, the worker must assign a risk level to the referral. The worker also must contact collateral sources if he or she determines additional information is needed to determine whether the referral should be accepted for investigation. The additional information also may be used to verify or clarify an allegation of abuse or neglect, or to inform decisions about an appropriate risk tag.

For purposes of CPS investigations and the emergent placement of a child in the home of an unlicensed relative or other suitable person, the DSHS is authorized to access criminal conviction and arrest data from the National Crime Information Center. Three conditions must be documented before the DSHS can access this information:

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- (1) the criminal history inquiry is about an alleged perpetrator in an open CPS case;
- (2) the alleged abuse incident has been reported to law enforcement; and
- (3) the information being requested can reasonably be expected to help in assessing or reducing risk to the alleged victim.

**Summary of Bill:**

When investigating and responding to allegations of sexual abuse involving a child, the DSHS CPS worker must search the Sex Offender Registry (Registry) maintained by the Washington State Patrol (WSP) to determine whether the alleged perpetrator is a registered sex offender. The WSP is directed to provide access to the Registry upon request by the DSHS.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 18, 2008.

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