

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 6114

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As Reported By Senate Committee On:  
Health & Long-Term Care, February 27, 2007

**Title:** An act relating to the caring for Washington individuals with autism task force.

**Brief Description:** Expanding the duties of the caring for Washington individuals with autism task force.

**Sponsors:** Senators Rasmussen, Roach, Kastama, Benton, Keiser, Morton, Kauffman, Stevens, Clements, Carrell, McCaslin, Marr, Swecker, Shin, Berkey, Pflug, Oemig, Weinstein, Spanel, Honeyford, Regala, Haugen, McAuliffe, Prentice, Fraser, Brown, Murray, Rockefeller, Eide, Tom, Delvin, Pridemore, Hewitt, Parlette, Kline, Kilmer and Kohl-Welles.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 2/26/07, 2/27/07 [DPS-WM].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Majority Report:** That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6114 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Fairley, Kastama, Kohl-Welles and Parlette.

**Staff:** Edith Rice (786-7444)

**Background:** Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a developmental disorder that affects a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. There is a wide variability in ASD symptoms and severity. IQs range from superior to severely mentally retarded. Twenty-five percent of people with ASD do not develop speech.

ASD affects as many as one in 166 children nationally. In Washington, the rate is similar, estimated to be between two and six children per 1,000. ASD is as common as juvenile diabetes, and more common than childhood cancer, Down Syndrome, deafness, or cystic fibrosis. The Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force was created by the passage of SB 5311 in 2005 to address the growing concerns about ASD in our state. The goal of the task force is to ensure that people with ASD are included in their communities and receive appropriate, timely, and legally-required services throughout their life. Regardless of age, race, ethnicity, and geography, an individual with ASD needs individualized, evidence-based, culturally effective, multidisciplinary interventions, comprehensive health care, and community inclusion.

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The task force issued a report and identified four areas where significant change needs to be made: infrastructure, treatment, training, and funding. In all, the task force developed 31 recommendations within these categories. The following six recommendations are considered by the task force to be essential first steps to improve the system of care for individuals with ASD:

- Create regional autism centers of excellence in targeted areas of the state.
- Increase Washington's capacity to identify and track people with ASD and the services they receive across their lifespan.
- Screen all Washington children for ASD before the age of three years, ideally by 18 months.
- Establish a minimum of one trained autism technical assistance specialist in each of the nine Educational Service Districts to provide support to teachers and staff.
- Ensure that state agencies already required to provide services to people with ASD will have in place staff training on ASD and ASD supports.
- Create an autism services guidebook which includes information and resources from birth through the lifespan.

Some of the task force recommendations will require long term systems changes. These changes include greatly increased access to comprehensive health care in a medical home, ongoing training of all types of professionals who work with individuals with ASD, fully funded and culturally effective provider and family support services, and full funding of regular and special education. Such systems improvements are essential and will benefit not only individuals with ASD, but all people with disabilities.

**Summary of Bill:** The Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force is created to assist in implementing recommendations of the task force, evaluate ways to improve the delivery and coordination of autism services in the state, review the recommendations submitted by the task force and assist in their implementation, review criteria for regional autism centers, consult with experts, create the Washington Service guidelines for individuals with autism book, monitor the federal combating autism act, review other issues and provide a report to the Legislature and Governor by December 1, 2008, on the status of the implementation of the 2006 task force recommendations.

**EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY RECOMMENDED SUBSTITUTE AS PASSED COMMITTEE (Health & Long-Term Care):** A parent of an adult individual with autism is added as a member of the task force.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on February 23, 2007.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** Yes.

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

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: We need to reach out and serve so many of these children and their parents who have not been served. We need better coordination of services. Many of the services recommended by this task force will benefit others with medical and mental health disabilities. Children whose needs do not get addressed fall through the cracks. Center for Disease Control and Prevention statistics relating to autism

occurrence have again increased. We need people who serve adults who can be on the task force, and services are needed for young adults. We need these services for our children and it hurts everyone to wait for diagnosis and services. We need links between clinical and research pathways. Incidence is increasing so funding should too. The bill should be more aggressive, and a guidebook would help parents.

CON: Some of these recommendations need to be more specific since some of these individuals are already served by the Developmental Disabilities Division. There should not be a separation of services.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator Rasmussen, prime sponsor; Dawn Sidell, Northwest Autism Center; Diana Stadden, Carol Taylor, Autism Task Force member; Allison Brooks, University of Washington Autism Center; Hanna Sheffield, Autism Community Services; Victoria Chirieleison, Erin Lynch, Monica Meyer, Roy Speaks, Chris Hazelton, citizens; David Harrell, Pro-Tech.

CON: Sue Elliot, Advocates for the Rights of Citizens with Developmental Disabilities of Washington; Donna Patrick, Developmental Disabilities Counsel.