

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6276

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 07, 2008

Title: An act relating to creating a domestic violence pilot program to colocate a domestic violence advocate in department of social and health services offices.

Brief Description: Creating a pilot program placing domestic violence advocates in offices of the division of children and family services.

Sponsors: Senators Kohl-Welles, Swecker, McAuliffe, Regala, Schoesler, Murray, Shin, Eide, Kauffman, Sheldon, Rasmussen, Kline and McDermott.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/24/08, 2/07/08 [DPS-WM].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6276 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member; Brandland, Carrell, Marr and McAuliffe.

Staff: Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

Background: According to the Child Welfare League of America, studies show that child abuse occurs in 30 to 60 percent of domestic violence cases that involve families with children. Between 1.5 million and 3.3 million children witness some form of violence at home each year. In one nationwide survey of 6,000 families, researchers found that 50 percent of men who frequently assault their wives also frequently abuse their children. In a 1991 Boston City Hospital study, researchers reported that 59 percent of mothers of abused and neglected children had medical records that suggested that their partners had battered them. In Washington, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) does not currently have a domestic violence program within its offices serving children and families involved with the child welfare system.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): DSHS must create a pilot project by January 2009 to place a full-time domestic violence (DV) expert in a minimum of two Division of Children and Family Services (DCFS) offices. The Secretary of DSHS must site one pilot in a county with a population of at least 1 million and the other in a county with a population of less than 200 thousand.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The program's purpose is to provide DV safety planning, information, and support to DCFS social workers in the office to assist them in identifying and responding effectively to DV.

DSHS must use a request for proposal (RFP) process to select the provider of the program. It must select the pilot sites by September 2008.

The DV expert is to provide consultation and training to DCFS social workers to assist them in identifying and responding to DV in their caseloads.

DSHS must select pilot sites in which supervisors who will work with the pilot have formal training and experience working with families affected by DV and have participated in best practices work groups for DV issues.

Alleged domestic violence shall not be considered in developing a case plan in a dependency case unless there has been a finding of DV under RCW 26.44, 26.09, 26.50 or 13.34.

By January 1, 2011, WSIPP must report on its evaluation of the pilot program. The evaluation is to include a comparison of the pilot sites with the non-pilot sites identified in the preprogram assessment to determine a number of outcomes. WSIPP is to use the evaluation results to identify the effectiveness of the pilot including the effectiveness of training and consultation, changes in social worker practices as a result of the pilot, improvements in services to families, and service gaps for families experiencing DV.

The pilot program expires January 1, 2012.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): DV experts to be collocated in 2 DCFS offices. The purpose of the pilot is amended to provide assistance to the DCFS social workers, not directly to the DCFS clients. A provision is added the alleged DV is not to be considered in case planning unless a finding of DV has occurred through a court process. Pre-assessment review by WSIPP is removed.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: There is a generational aspect to DV. Children form values and attitudes from family members. If there is DV in the home, they learn inappropriate methods by which to deal with conflict. This bill can assist in breaking the cycle of abuse. The program in Whatcom County received private money to institute a program similar to the pilot in this bill. The program was very successful in building collaborative relationships between DV advocates and social workers at DCFS. They found that in cases in which DV advocates were involved, fewer children were placed in out of home care.

Many abused women want to protect their children but don't know where to turn or how to protect their children from the effects of DV. Sometimes the first intervention is with Child

Protective Services and they are blamed for not protecting the children. Some families with DV issues are referred to CPS multiple times and this pilot can help serve these families more effectively. There is a lack of understanding by social workers about the dynamics of DV. This pilot will give the social workers the tools they need to understand DV and provide caring support and referrals to community resources to DV victims. Providing social workers with information about the unique aspects of DV can only serve to enhance child safety. This bill will help keep children out of foster care and with the non-abusing parent which is where they are better off.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Kohl-Welles, prime sponsor; Terri Kimball, City of Seattle; Karen Burke, Domestic Violence/Sexual Assault Services Whatcom County; Kay Tomlinson, DAWN Board; Ann Lokey, Foster Parent; Jay Olson, DAWN Board; Thomas Paulson, citizen; Susan Adams, Crystal Judson Family Justice Center; Deborah Greenleaf, Seattle/King County Public Health; Grace Huang, Washington State Coalition Against Violence.