

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 2905

As Reported by House Committee On:
Local Government & Housing

Title: An act relating to planning for the discontinuation of discharge of vulnerable populations from state institutions into homelessness.

Brief Description: Planning for the discontinuation of discharge of vulnerable populations from state institutions into homelessness.

Sponsors: Representatives Miloscia, Upthegrove, White, Springer, Williams, Appleton, Kenney and Ormsby.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Local Government & Housing: 1/27/10, 2/1/10 [DPS].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Creates a statutory scheme for the implementation of a statewide plan to ensure that persons leaving state custody, care, or supervision are provided with services for obtaining housing.
- Requires specified state agencies to collect data regarding the housing status of persons being released from the custody, care, or supervision of the state.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT & HOUSING

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Simpson, Chair; Nelson, Vice Chair; Miloscia, Springer, Upthegrove, White and Williams.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 3 members: Representatives Angel, Ranking Minority Member; Fagan and Short.

Staff: Becca Kenna-Schenk (786-7291) and Thamas Osborn (786-7129).

Background:

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 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Discharge Coordination Policy.
The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) issues funds to state and local governments for homeless assistance programs. Federal law requires state and local government applicants for certain HUD homeless funds to certify that the governmental entity has in place policies and protocols to prevent the discharge of individuals into homelessness, and to report on progress in developing and implementing such protocols.

Individual Reentry Plans.

The Department of Corrections (DOC) is required to develop an Individual Reentry Plan (IRP) for all inmates in the DOC's custody for the period of incarceration through release into the community. The plan addresses the employment, education, substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, and family reunification needs of the offender that are necessary to facilitate successful reintegration into the community. Prior to discharge of any offender, the DOC must complete an evaluation of the offender, and, if possible, connect the offender with existing services and resources that address the offender's needs.

Independent Youth Housing Program.

The Independent Youth Housing Program (Program), administered by the Department of Commerce, provides housing stipends and case management services to youth ages 18 to 23 who have exited the state dependency system.

The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) collaborates with the Department of Commerce to refer dependent youth nearing the age of 18 to the Program. The DSHS also provides information to the Department of Commerce regarding the number of youth exiting the state dependency system eligible for state assistance and annually recommends strategies to the Legislature that may help reduce this number.

Release of Juvenile Offenders from DSHS Custody.

The DSHS is required to set a release date for each juvenile committed to its custody. Upon release from a juvenile rehabilitation facility, the DSHS may place a juvenile offender under parole supervision.

Release of Indigent Patients from a State Hospital.

The DSHS is the designated state mental health authority and oversees the three state mental health hospitals. State law specifies that no indigent patient may be released or discharged from involuntary treatment from a state hospital without suitable clothing and a sum of money deemed necessary for the patient's immediate welfare.

Regional Support Networks.

Regional support networks (RSNs) are geographic service areas established to develop local systems of care for persons with mental illnesses. The RSNs consist of counties or groups of counties authorized to contract with licensed mental health service providers and deliver services directly. There are currently 13 RSNs in Washington.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Overview of the Act.

A new statutory scheme is established for the implementation of a statewide plan to ensure that persons leaving state custody, care, or supervision are provided with services for obtaining housing. The stated intent of the act is to:

- gather evidence to discover the nature of homelessness;
- collect adequate and appropriate data related to the housing status of persons discharged from state institutions or under ongoing care from a public institution;
- develop a certification that a statewide policy for the discharge of persons from publicly funded institutions that is in compliance with regulations issued by the HUD for jurisdictions receiving federal emergency shelter grant dollars; and
- identify strategies and resources necessary to eliminate the occurrence of any state institution discharging persons into homelessness by 2015.

Planning Requirements.

By December 1, 2010, the DOC and the DSHS must each submit a plan to the Legislature for eliminating homelessness or placement into temporary housing for individuals either being discharged from state custody or receiving ongoing care from a state agency. The plans for both agencies must:

- identify the resources and actions necessary to eliminate homelessness or placement into time-limited housing by 2015;
- include provisions for the discharge of individuals with long-term disabilities into permanent housing;
- include stakeholders the planning process; and
- contain performance measures.

DOC Requirements.

Prior to the discharge of any offender, the DOC must record the housing status arranged for the offender. The DOC must continue to record the offender's housing status for the duration of the offender's supervision and anytime the offender's status is otherwise obtained.

DSHS Requirements.

The DSHS must annually provide the Department of Commerce's Program with the number of youth aging out of the state dependency system who do not have stable and affordable housing.

Prior to the release of any juvenile from custody of the Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration, the DSHS must record the details of the juvenile's housing situation. The DSHS must continue to record the juvenile's housing status for the duration of his or her parole period and anytime the juvenile's status is otherwise obtained.

The DSHS must also record the housing status of indigent patients when they are discharged from state hospitals.

Requirements for Regional Support Networks.

Regional support networks must track the housing status of patients receiving care when there is a change in the patient's housing status or, at minimum, annually.

The requirements for the DOC and the DSHS to record the housing status of individuals being discharged from state custody may not prevent or delay the release of the individuals.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill:

The substitute bill makes the following changes to the original bill:

- specifies that the new requirements for the DOC and the DSHS to record the housing status of individuals being discharged from state custody may not prevent or delay the release of the individuals; and
- makes technical corrections.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date of Substitute Bill: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately, except section 5, which reinstates prior law related to provisions for Individual Reentry Plans and takes effect August 1, 2010.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) One of the leading causes of homelessness in Washington occurs when individuals are discharged from state institutions and left without access to safe and stable housing. This problem directly affects children and families as well. This bill seeks to improve state planning of homelessness prevention by making sure these individuals and their families know where they will be living post-release. The state has already established a goal of reducing homelessness by 50 percent by 2015, yet a huge portion of the homeless population is a result of being discharged into homelessness from state institutions. Homeless individuals ultimately cost the state a lot of money. Currently, the DOC and the DSHS do not know where people are going after being released from state custody. The bill should be amended to ensure that individuals are not held in state custody past their release date as a result of the recording requirements established by the bill.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Miloscia, prime sponsor; Bob Cooper, National Association of Social Workers Washington Chapter; Doreen Cato, Committee to End Homelessness and First Place; Lynn Davidson, Common Ground, Washington State Coalition for the Homeless, and Washington Low-Income Housing Alliance; and Joe Ingram, Vets Edge.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.