

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## 2SHB 2106

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As of March 24, 2009

**Title:** An act relating to improving child welfare outcomes through the phased implementation of strategic and proven reforms.

**Brief Description:** Improving child welfare outcomes through the phased implementation of strategic and proven reforms.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Representatives Kagi, Roberts, Kenney and Morrell).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 3/09/09, 97-0.

**Committee Activity:** Human Services & Corrections: 3/26/09.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

**Staff:** Jennifer Strus (786-7316)

**Background:** The Children's Administration (CA) within the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) provides child welfare services (CWS) to children in out-of-home care and their families. CWS includes out-of-home care, case management, and adoption services. CWS also includes the legal case management of the case. Historically, about 30 percent of CWS has been provided by child-placing agencies with whom CA contracts. The contracts, however, are not performance-based.

CA contracts with many private agencies across the state to provide a host of services to its clients. There are currently about 1,800 contracts with different providers. The contracts are managed at both the regional and headquarters level.

Budgeting for the state's share of foster care costs includes use of information developed by the Caseload Forecast Council. State appropriations for foster care are increased or reduced depending on the forecasted caseload. When DSHS is successful in reducing foster care caseloads through implementation of prevention and intervention programs and policies, the savings from reduced caseloads are not available to be used for reinvestment into sustaining or expanding these programs to achieve long-term statewide reforms.

**Summary of Bill:** DSHS must collaborate with community partners and stakeholders in two demonstration regions to develop a plan for implementing a core set of performance-based

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contracts to deliver evidence-based and promising prevention and intervention services to children and families to prevent the need for and reduce the length of stay in foster care. The implementation plan must describe:

- the array of services to be delivered under the contracts in order to allow providers flexibility to offer relevant and appropriate services depending on the family's needs;
- the outcome measures to be used in evaluating performance under the contracts;
- how families will be referred, and a process for continued communication between the provider and DSHS to assure child safety and well-being and promote family engagement; and
- the optimum balance of shared responsibility between the state and community-based providers for child protection and child welfare.

The CA of DSHS must, when selecting the demonstration regions, consider the capacity within the region to deliver evidence-based prevention and intervention programs; the willingness and ability of the community and stakeholders to collaborate in developing the plan by the reporting date; and the existence of any multidisciplinary or multisystem work groups in the region already engaged in performance improvement or reform efforts.

By November 30, 2009, CA must report to the Governor and the Legislature with a plan to begin implementation by January 1, 2010. By December 1, 2010, CA must provide a status update and recommendations for continued progress.

One or more knowledgeable representatives from the Caseload Forecast Council, the Office of Financial Management, and DSHS jointly must develop a proposal to be considered by the Legislature and the Governor allowing for the savings from reduced foster care caseloads in the demonstration regions to be reinvested in those regions to expand evidence-based and promising practices to prevent the need for or reduce the duration of foster care placements. The agencies must brief the Governor and the Legislature by November 30, 2009.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

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