

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1718

As Reported by House Committee On:
Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness

Title: An act relating to offenders with developmental disabilities or traumatic brain injuries.

Brief Description: Concerning offenders with developmental disabilities or traumatic brain injuries.

Sponsors: Representatives Roberts, Moeller, Dammeier and Green.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Public Safety & Emergency Preparedness: 2/11/11, 2/16/11 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands eligibility for mental health court to nonviolent offenders who have an intellectual or developmental disability (I/DD) or who have suffered a traumatic brain injury (TBI).
- Requires jail staff to make a reasonable effort to communicate the nature of a person's I/DD or TBI to a receiving facility's staff.
- Requires the Department of Social and Health Services to adopt rules to expedite enrollment in Medical Assistance for a person with an I/DD or TBI who is released from confinement.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY & EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 10 members: Representatives Hurst, Chair; Ladenburg, Vice Chair; Pearson, Ranking Minority Member; Klippert, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Armstrong, Goodman, Hope, Kirby, Moscoso and Ross.

Staff: Alexa Silver (786-7190).

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.

Mental Health Courts: Counties may operate mental health courts, which have a special docket designed to reduce recidivism and symptoms of mental illness for nonviolent, mentally ill offenders. Mental health courts aim to increase the likelihood of a mentally ill offender's successful rehabilitation through treatment, periodic reviews, and other rehabilitation services. Minimum requirements for establishment of a mental health court are that the offender: (1) would benefit from psychiatric treatment; (2) does not have a prior conviction for a serious violent or sex offense; and (3) is not currently charged with a sex offense, a serious violent offense, an offense during which the offender used a firearm, or an offense during which the offender caused substantial or great bodily harm or death.

Medical Assistance Benefits: Medical Assistance benefits such as Medicaid allow for medical care under the federal Social Security Act. When an eligible person is booked into a correctional facility, the person stops receiving state-funded services while in custody and is no longer eligible for Medical Assistance.

In 2005 the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) began adopting policies and rules providing that Medical Assistance coverage be fully reinstated on the date of release from confinement of a person with a mental disorder who was enrolled in Medical Assistance immediately prior to confinement. In January 2009 the DSHS published a report proposing a five-phase model for promptly reinstating eligibility for a previous Medical Assistance recipient who is released from incarceration.

House Bill 2078 Work Group: During the 2009 interim, a work group made up of representatives from the Department of Corrections (DOC), jails, advocates for persons with intellectual and developmental disabilities (I/DD) and traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and others met to address the special needs of persons with I/DD and TBI when they come into contact with local and state correctional facilities. The work group published a report in August 2010 that provided a sample screening tool, a model policy, and training materials.

Summary of Bill:

Mental Health Courts: Counties may establish and operate mental health courts to reduce recidivism and symptoms of mental illness for nonviolent offenders who have an I/DD or TBI. Among the requirements for participation is that the offender would benefit from psychiatric treatment or treatment related to the I/DD or TBI.

Transfer to a Correctional Facility: When a jail determines that a person in custody may have an I/DD or TBI and the person is transferred to a DOC facility or another jail, jail staff must make every reasonable effort to communicate the nature of the disability and any necessary accommodations to the receiving facility's staff.

Re-enrollment in Medical Assistance: The DSHS must adopt policies and rules providing that Medical Assistance coverage be fully reinstated on the date of release from confinement of a person with an I/DD or TBI who was enrolled in Medical Assistance immediately prior to confinement.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) This bill contains recommendations from a report issued by a work group, which included sheriffs, people with developmental disabilities, and service organizations. Communication between jail staff and correctional staff is critical, because inmates are vulnerable and staff are at risk when this communication does not occur. Mental health courts' jurisdiction over cases of people with I/DD and TBI should be clarified, because mental health courts give serious thought to how to appropriately serve these populations.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Roberts, prime sponsor; David Maltman, Washington State Developmental Disabilities Council; and David Lord and Bette Fleishman, Disability Rights of Washington.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.