

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SHB 1816

As Passed House:
March 6, 2017

Title: An act relating to information sharing regarding implementation the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Brief Description: Concerning information sharing related to implementation of the homeless youth prevention and protection act of 2015.

Sponsors: House Committee on Early Learning & Human Services (originally sponsored by Representatives Frame, Goodman, Lovick, Ortiz-Self, Kilduff, Muri, Doglio, Macri and Fey; by request of Department of Social and Health Services).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/8/17, 2/10/17 [DPS].

Floor Activity:

Passed House: 3/6/17, 96-2.

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Allows the Department of Social and Health Services to disclose confidential child welfare records to the Department of Commerce for youth admitted to crisis residential centers (CRC) or HOPE centers.
- Modifies certain administrative responsibilities related to CRCs and HOPE centers.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: The substitute bill be substituted therefor and the substitute bill do pass. Signed by 12 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McDonald, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Klippert, Lovick, McCaslin, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Dawn Eychaner (786-7135).

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.

In 2015 the Legislature created the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Programs (Office) at the Department of Commerce (COM). With the establishment of the Office, programs serving homeless and unaccompanied youth, including crisis residential centers (CRC) and HOPE centers, were transferred from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to the COM.

Crisis Residential Centers.

A CRC is a short-term secure or semi-secure facility providing a temporary residence for runaway youth and adolescents in conflict with their families. Counselors at a CRC work with the family to resolve the immediate conflict and may refer the family for additional services. At the request of the child or parent, a CRC administrator may convene a multidisciplinary team to assist with coordination and delivery of services to the family.

HOPE Centers.

HOPE centers provide temporary residence and services for street youth under the age of 18. Youth residing in a HOPE center receive a comprehensive assessment that may include referrals and permanency planning.

Summary of Substitute Bill:

Confidential Child Welfare Records.

The DSHS may disclose confidential child welfare records for youth in foster care to the COM and its contracted providers. Records may be disclosed for the purpose of ensuring the safety and welfare of foster youth who are admitted to CRCs and HOPE centers under contract with the Office. Records used for these purposes must remain confidential and may not be disclosed further by the COM and its contractors.

Notification to the DSHS regarding: (a) law enforcement's transport of a child to a CRC; and (b) unauthorized leave from a CRC by a child, is only required in cases where the child is in the care of or receiving services from the DSHS Children's Administration.

Responsibility for adopting rules related to CRC licensing are transferred from the COM to the DSHS, and language is clarified to update the terms "secretary" and "department" to reference the DSHS with respect to rules and licensing for CRC and HOPE centers. Responsibility for requesting state agency participation on multidisciplinary teams serving children and parents is transferred from the CRC administrator to the COM. The COM must provide information about state agency participation on the team to the CRC administrator. A CRC administrator, rather than the COM, may establish rules related to the hours a resident may come and go from a CRC.

The requirement for a HOPE center administrator to accompany a resident leaving the HOPE center to attend school or other necessary appointments is removed. HOPE center administrators may establish rules allowing residents to come and go from the facility at reasonable hours. Administrators may require that a resident leaving the facility:

- be accompanied by a facility administrator or designee; and
- notify the administrator of his or her intent to leave, intended destination, and probable time of his or her return to the facility.

Approval by the DSHS for payment for a HOPE center bed for a dependent youth is no longer required.

For a petition filed in juvenile court by a parent, child, or the COM for a child in need of services, the definition is changed to allow the DSHS to file a petition instead of the COM.

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 is a largely technical fix to allow agencies to share information regarding youth being served by these programs. When the CRCs and HOPE centers were moved from the DSHS to the COM, there were confidentiality provisions that were not amended appropriately, and this bill makes those corrections to ensure these processes continue to work. These programs are operated as a partnership between the COM, the DSHS, and service providers. Clarity on agency roles is needed, particularly where there are references to "department" that need to be updated to the DSHS if it pertains to the DSHS' role with respect to dependent youth. Current statutory language for HOPE centers is more restrictive than what is currently in statute for the CRCs. HOPE centers are in violation of the law if kids don't go to school and in violation of the law if a center administrator doesn't accompany them to school. HOPE centers don't have adequate staff to do this. When youth are referred to a shelter, providers receive very limited information about the youth, sometimes not even their name. Allowing information to be shared with providers will avoid potential conflicts.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Representative Frame, prime sponsor; Jennifer Strus, Department of Social and Health Services; Kim Justice, Department of Commerce; Kelsey Peronto, Northwest Youth Services; and Shoshana Wineburg, YouthCare.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.