

HOUSE BILL REPORT

SSB 6309

As Reported by House Committee On:
Early Learning & Human Services
Appropriations

Title: An act relating to extending the timeline for completing a family assessment response.

Brief Description: Extending the timeline for completing a family assessment response.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Darneille, Miloscia, O'Ban, Rivers, Frockt and Hunt).

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Early Learning & Human Services: 2/20/18, 2/21/18 [DP];
Appropriations: 2/24/18, 2/26/18 [DP].

Brief Summary of Substitute Bill

- Extends the timeline for which family assessment response services can be offered with parental agreement from 90 days to 120 days.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EARLY LEARNING & HUMAN SERVICES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 13 members: Representatives Kagi, Chair; Senn, Vice Chair; Dent, Ranking Minority Member; McCaslin, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Eslick, Frame, Goodman, Griffey, Kilduff, Klippert, Lovick, Muri and Ortiz-Self.

Staff: Luke Wickham (786-7146).

Background:

Family Assessment Response.

In 2014 the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) began implementation of a differential response system for responding to allegations of child abuse and neglect with low to moderate risk of child maltreatment called family assessment response (FAR). The FAR services were phased-in throughout the state until full implementation was completed on June 1, 2017.

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.

Upon receiving a report of child abuse or neglect that screens in for a response, the DSHS must either refer the case for investigation or the FAR. The DSHS developed a method by which to assign cases to investigation or the FAR. Cases must be referred for investigation when the assessment determines that there is a risk of imminent harm to the child, a serious threat of substantial harm to the child, the conduct constitutes criminal activity, the child is abandoned, the child is dependent, or in a facility licensed by the DSHS or the Department of Early Learning.

The DSHS must complete FAR services within 45 days of receiving the child abuse and neglect report, and parents may agree to extend the response period up to 90 days. Parents must agree to participate in FAR services before services begin.

On July 1, 2018, the child welfare functions of the DSHS transfer to the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF).

Summary of Bill:

The length of time that FAR services can be offered with parental agreement is increased from 90 to 120 days. The extension of the FAR period must be operated within the appropriation of the DCYF.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect July 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Families do not have enough time to complete treatment services under current law, and this bill is necessary to fix that problem. This bill extends the timeframe of the FAR from 90 to 120 days. There are many services that families cannot be referred to because of the current time limit. It usually takes a few weeks for a social worker to provide the referrals to services, and there is usually less than 90 days that parents have available for services while being served by the FAR.

This bill would help reduce re-referrals into services.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Senator Darneille, prime sponsor; Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development; and Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 33 members: Representatives Ormsby, Chair; Robinson, Vice Chair; Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; MacEwen, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Stokesbary, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Bergquist, Buys, Caldier, Cody, Condotta, Fitzgibbon, Graves, Haler, Hansen, Harris, Hudgins, Jinkins, Kagi, Lytton, Manweller, Pettigrew, Pollet, Sawyer, Schmick, Senn, Springer, Stanford, Sullivan, Taylor, Tharinger, Vick, Volz and Wilcox.

Staff: Mary Mulholland (786-7391).

Summary of Recommendation of Committee On Appropriations Compared to Recommendation of Committee On Early Learning & Human Services:

No new changes were recommended.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect on July 1, 2018.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony:

(In support) Fewer than 3 percent of Family Assessment Response (FAR) families receive evidence-based practices (EBPs) and fewer than 10 percent receive in-home services. Expanding the time frame for FAR will help increase utilization of these services and will reduce the risk of repeat involvement with Child Protective Services or placement into foster care. Outside evaluators of FAR agree that it will produce better results if families participate in more EBPs. No new entitlement is created.

Part of a recent federal continuing resolution that passed the United States House of Representatives contained language that might allow greater flexibility of federal Title IV-E funds. If this proposal comes to fruition in the future, it may be possible to use Title IV-E funds to reimburse some of the costs of services like FAR even without a waiver.

(Opposed) None.

Persons Testifying: Mary Fischer, Institute for Family Development; and Laurie Lippold, Partners for Our Children.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.