
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5349

State of Washington

65th Legislature

2017 Regular Session

By Senate Health Care (originally sponsored by Senators Cleveland, Billig, Rivers, Conway, Keiser, Saldaña, Hasegawa, Frockt, and Kuderer)

READ FIRST TIME 02/14/17.

1 AN ACT Relating to elder justice centers; adding a new section to
2 chapter 74.34 RCW; and creating a new section.

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

4 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** The legislature finds that the number of
5 Washingtonians age sixty-five and older is projected to exceed one
6 and one-half million by 2030. The number of residents age eighty-five
7 and older is increasing at an even faster rate, and is expected to
8 more than double over the next two decades. The legislature also
9 finds that the number of seniors who are abused, exploited, or
10 neglected every year is on the rise, with some research indicating
11 that one in ten seniors has suffered some form of abuse or neglect at
12 least once. The legislature finds that the number of reports to adult
13 protective services in Washington has increased twenty-five percent
14 since 2008, and the number of cases investigated has increased thirty
15 percent, with twenty-one thousand cases forwarded for investigation
16 in 2013. Complex and time-intensive financial exploitation cases now
17 represent nearly one-third of all investigations. The legislature
18 further finds that national researchers believe the majority of cases
19 go unreported out of embarrassment, confusion about what happened, or
20 fear of being cut off from family or loved ones. The legislature also
21 finds that recognition of and mechanisms for dealing with elder abuse

1 and exploitation lag many years behind the strides that have been
2 made in child abuse awareness and protection. The legislature
3 therefore intends to establish two demonstration programs for elder
4 justice centers modeled on the state's children's advocacy centers,
5 with the goal of coordinating resources and increasing community
6 capacity to prevent and respond to abuse, neglect, and exploitation
7 of Washington's growing population of elders and vulnerable adults.

8 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 2.** A new section is added to chapter 74.34
9 RCW to read as follows:

10 (1) The department shall establish elder justice center
11 demonstration programs to be operated in counties with a population
12 of between four hundred thousand and five hundred thousand. The
13 department may contract directly with the counties for the
14 implementation of the demonstration programs in accordance with the
15 requirements in this section. Rather than establish new facilities,
16 the department must give priority to contracting with established
17 elder justice centers to minimize costs and to expand programs that
18 are currently in use or planned in these counties.

19 (2) For the purposes of this section, "elder justice center"
20 means a senior-focused program that coordinates a multidisciplinary
21 approach to the prevention, investigation, prosecution, and treatment
22 of abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation of
23 vulnerable adults.

24 (3) The elder justice centers must coordinate access to services
25 including, but not limited to, advocacy and case review by
26 multidisciplinary teams that include, but are not limited to, adult
27 protective services, law enforcement officers, a prosecuting
28 attorney, a victim advocate, and a program coordinator.
29 Multidisciplinary teams also may include community agencies and
30 systems that are involved with the prevention and response to elder
31 abandonment, abuse, neglect, and financial exploitation.

32 (4) The elder justice centers must develop written protocols to
33 address the coordination of investigations between the prosecutor's
34 office, law enforcement, adult protective services, local advocacy
35 groups, and any other local agency involved in the criminal
36 investigation of vulnerable adult abandonment, abuse, neglect, and
37 financial exploitation. The protocol must be developed by the county
38 prosecuting attorney with the assistance of the other entities named
39 in this subsection.

1 (5) The department shall submit, in compliance with RCW
2 43.01.036, the following reports to the governor and the legislature:
3 (a) By January 10, 2018, a brief progress report describing the
4 status of implementation at the elder justice centers;
5 (b) By January 10, 2019, an interim report outlining the
6 structure and operation of the elder justice centers; and
7 (c) By December 1, 2020, a final report discussing the
8 effectiveness of the elder justice center model in increasing
9 community capacity to prevent and respond to abandonment, abuse,
10 neglect, and financial exploitation of vulnerable adults. The final
11 report also must contain recommendations for modifying or expanding
12 additional demonstration programs.

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