

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5096

As of Third Reading

Title: An act relating to short-term case aides that provide temporary assistance for foster parents.

Brief Description: Concerning short-term case aides that provide temporary assistance for foster parents.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (originally sponsored by Senator O'Ban).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation: 2/05/19, 2/19/19 [DPS].

Brief Summary of First Substitute Bill

- Allows short-term case aides supporting foster families to be either volunteers or employees of nonprofit community-based organizations.
- Extends the Washington Institute for Public Policy final report on short-term case aides to June 30, 2021.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES, REENTRY & REHABILITATION

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5096 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Darneille, Chair; Nguyen, Vice Chair; Walsh, Ranking Member; Cleveland, O'Ban, Wilson, C. and Zeiger.

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Foster Care Respite Care. The Department of Child, Youth and Families (DCYF) offers a program of respite care to provide temporary, short-term relief to foster parents who care for foster children with emotional, mental, or physical handicaps. Respite care is designed to minimize disruption to the foster child.

In 2017, the Legislature expanded respite care to include short-term support provided by case aides who provide temporary assistance to foster parents as needed with the overall goal of

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supporting the parental efforts of the foster parents. This assistance does not include overnight assistance. DCYF contracts with nonprofit community-based organizations (CBO) in each region to establish a statewide pool of individuals to provide this short term support. These individuals are hired by the CBO and must have appropriate training, background checks, and qualifications as determined by DCYF. At the request of the foster parent or as offered by a CBO, short-term support must be available to all licensed foster parents in the state as funding is available and must be phased in by geographic region. If the requests for short-term support exceed the funding available, the CBO must have discretion to determine the assignment of case aides. The CBO must report all short-term support provided to DCYF and costs associated with the case aides providing this short-term support must not be included in the forecast. The competitive procurement process, and contract provision is expressly mandated by the Legislature. In 2017, the Legislature appropriated \$540,000 in state fiscal year 2018, and \$540,000 in state fiscal year 2019 for the short-term support services program.

Washington Institute for Public Policy Preliminary Report. This same legislation required the Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP) to prepare an outcome evaluation of this short-term support program. The intent of the evaluation is, to the maximum extent possible, assess the impact of this short-term support service on the retention of foster homes and the number of placements a foster child receives as well as the return on investment to the state. A preliminary report was submitted to the Legislature and the Governor, as required by statute, in November 2018. The preliminary report describes the short-term case program, initial program implementation, information regarding program utilization to date, plans for outcome evaluations, and identifies potential data limitations.

In response to information received from a statewide request for information, the short-term case support services program was implemented as a regional pilot program with two CBO covering two counties—Skagit and Whatcom. DCYF intends to expand the program by June 2019. From June to September 2018, thirteen families requested services of which eight families received services. Contracted organizations bill DCYF at an hourly service rate of \$35, including travel time. Organizations may also bill for activity fees up to \$15 per youth activity. For this time period, 85.35 service hours were provided, averaging 10.67 hours per family.

A final report must be submitted by June 30, 2021.

Summary of First Substitute Bill: Short-term case aides can either be employees or volunteers of nonprofit community-based organizations. Volunteers are subject to training requirements, background checks and qualifications as determined by DCYF. The Washington Institute for Public Policy final report on short-term case aides is due June 30, 2021.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members: No.

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

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: *The committee recommended a different version of the bill than what was heard.* PRO: Currently, if a child-placing agency uses a volunteer as a short-term case aide, the agency is not able to get reimbursed from DCYF for the services provided. It is not about cutting costs, it is pre-foster care. Some volunteers end up wanting to become foster parents and these volunteers have a better idea of what it takes to be a foster family. Other volunteers often have previous experience working with children. All are subject to the same background checks and training standards as employees who work as short-term case aides. Using volunteers is a great way to provide a greatly needed service and to recruit future foster families.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Steve O'Ban, Prime Sponsor; Ray Deck, Skookum Kids.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: No one.