

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5691

As of February 13, 2023

Title: An act relating to resource and assessment centers.

Brief Description: Concerning resource and assessment centers.

Sponsors: Senators Warnick and Shewmake.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services: 2/13/23.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Expands the use of resource and assessment centers by allowing them to serve older children, provide longer stays and respite care, and allowing them to serve children who had to leave placement for behavior or safety concerns.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES

Staff: Alison Mendiola (786-7488)

Background: Resource and assessment centers (RACs) are agencies that provide short-term emergency and crisis care for up to 72 hours, not including the weekends and holidays, to children who have been removed from their parent's or guardian's care by Child Protective Services or law enforcement.

The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) may license a RAC if it meets the following requirements:

- there is a demonstrated need for the center in the local community;
- the center will be primarily staffed by trained volunteers; and
- the center is not financially dependent on reimbursement from the state to operate.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

There are two RACs statewide operated by one organization, one located in Bellingham and one in Ellensburg. Currently, RACs:

- can only take initial placements;
- are limited in the children they serve, ages 5-12;
- operate up to 24 hours per day, 7 days per week;
- can not provide respite care; and
- can not serve children with behavior or safety concerns.

Summary of Bill: RACs may provide care for children ages birth through 17 at the discretion of the RAC and:

- provide care for children for up to seven days, or up to 14 days with DCYF approval;
- provide respite care;
- serve children who had to leave placement for behavior of safety concerns; and
- preserve the ability to operate primarily with volunteers.

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: PRO: Expanding the use of RACs adds another tool in the toolbox. Expanding the use of RACs is better than placing kids in hotel rooms. The purpose of RACs is to provide time for DCYF to find an ideal placement for the child. Often kids come to the RAC during the evenings and weekends and little is known about them. DCYF often calls RACs to place a child where the first placement did not work out but the strict terms of the RAC license prevents the RAC from taking that child. This bill would create that flexibility. RACs do screen for safety, and do not accept kids they do not have the capacity to serve.

CON: The flexibility sought by RACs make them look a lot like emergency respite care, which requires more training and paid staff vs. RACs which are mostly run by volunteers. Happy to work on language to address these concerns.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Judy Warnick, Prime Sponsor; Ray Deck III, Skookum Kids.

CON: Allison Krutsinger, Dept of Children, Youth and Families.

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