

SENATE BILL REPORT

SSB 5666

As Passed Senate, March 9, 2005

Title: An act relating to information sharing in child dependency cases.

Brief Description: Regarding information sharing in child dependency cases.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Human Services & Corrections (originally sponsored by Senators Stevens, Hargrove, McAuliffe, Carrell, Brandland, Delvin, Roach, Rasmussen and Kohl-Welles).

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 2/8/05, 2/24/05 [DPS].

Passed Senate: 3/9/05, 46-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5666 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Brandland, Carrell and McAuliffe.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: The Department of Social and Health Services is authorized to establish guidelines relating to information sharing between agency divisions, service providers, caseworkers, the courts, families and others involved in dependency proceedings. Analysis of the child dependency system as a result of a child fatality review conducted in 2001 found that communication of relevant information was poor. Subsequent child fatality reviews have indicated similar and continuing problems in ensuring that decision makers were provided with complete and appropriate information.

Summary of Bill: Caseworkers, caseworker supervisors, courts, child protection team members, guardians ad litem, parents, and counsel involved in cases where there has been a finding of child abuse or neglect must be provided with all appropriate information prior to any placement decision being made.

The following information and documents must be provided and shared in their entirety: health care, substance abuse, mental health information and other information as required by the department. Any sharing of information must be in compliance with state and federal law governing the release of confidential information.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

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

Testimony For: Close cases require thoughtful informed decision making and need all available information. Placement may occur before all the information is available. We support amending the bill to allow for this in emergent situations. We intend to improve shared decision making.

Testimony Against: None.

Who Testified: PRO: John Stout, Executive Director CASA; Patsy Smith, King County CASA; Uma Ahluwalia, Assistant Secretary, Children's Administration, DSHS.