

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 6749

As Reported By Senate Committee On:
Human Services & Corrections, February 1, 2006

Title: An act relating to establishing a foster parent critical support and retention program.

Brief Description: Establishing a foster parent critical support and retention program.

Sponsors: Senators Hargrove, Schmidt and Rasmussen.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Human Services & Corrections: 1/31/06, 2/1/06 [DPS-WM, w/oRec].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HUMAN SERVICES & CORRECTIONS

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 6749 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass and be referred to Committee on Ways & Means.

Signed by Senators Hargrove, Chair; Regala, Vice Chair; Stevens, Ranking Minority Member and McAuliffe.

Minority Report: That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Brandland and Carrell.

Staff: Indu Thomas (786-7459)

Background: Foster homes provide twenty-four hour care for children of all ages who need temporary or extended out-of-home placement due to child abuse, neglect, or family conflict. Foster care is provided by licensed foster parents. Foster care services are also available with licensed foster parents through community child placing agencies.

Currently, foster parent support and training services are provided to licensed foster parents by the Children's Administration. Prospective foster parents must attend an orientation and participate in 30 hours of training prior to becoming licensed. Foster parents must also participate in 36 hours of training every three years to maintain their licenses. Prior to certification to care for sexually aggressive or physically aggressive children, an additional six-hour course and an examination are required. Training may be completed in person or through on-line courses.

Each child in foster care is assigned a social worker, and each foster parent works with a licenser. In June 2005, the Foster Parent & Caregiver Support Line was established. This support line is available 4:30 p.m.– 8:00 a.m. Monday through Friday, and throughout weekends and holidays. Foster parents are encouraged to contact the licenser or social worker assigned to them or the children in their care during business hours. The professionals who staff this line provide verbal assistance in crisis situations and will contact a local after-hours social worker to visit the home if the situation requires direct attention.

Summary of Substitute Bill: This bill establishes a foster parent critical support and retention program for foster parents who care for children who are sexually or physically aggressive. The Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) is required to provide:

- 24-hour-a-day 7-day-a-week emergency assistance;
- Assessment of risk and development of a safety and supervision plan;
- Home-based foster parent training using evidence-based models;
- Ongoing support groups; and
- Referral to community services.

Substitute Bill Compared to Original Bill: Removes the intent section and changes all references to "children who act out sexually" to "sexually aggressive youth".

Appropriation: \$275,000.

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: There has been a regional trial of a program which provides additional support and case management services to foster parents in Region Five. This program has been effective in stabilizing children in placements and during the past twelve months none of the foster parents have left the program.

Testimony Against: There are services in place that would address some of the components of this bill. The passport program and an additional program that requires other medical and educational records to be provided to foster parents are being integrated.

Who Testified: PRO: Kris Baglio & Brenda Hayes, Metropolitan Development Counsel.

CON: Christine Robinson, DSHS Children's Administration.